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Wednesday, 13 May 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Murmokaitė	(Lithuania)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Small arms

The human cost of the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons

Report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons (S/2015/289)

Letter dated 1 May 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2015/306)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Small arms

The human cost of the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons

Report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons (S/2015/289)

Letter dated 1 May 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2015/306)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Colombia, Croatia, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Paraguay, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey and Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Mr. Karamoko Diakité, President of the Côte d'Ivoire chapter of the West African Action Network on Small Arms.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, and His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/289, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons. I also wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/306, containing a letter dated 1 May 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and I now give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: I thank the President for convening this important debate.

Over the past decade, the world has been afflicted by over 250 conflicts. While no two have been the same, the widespread availability of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition is common to all. More than 50,000 men, women and children are killed each year as a direct consequence, and the number of those displaced has reached levels not seen since the Second World War. Civilians, including children, suffer the most. Ruthless, targeted attacks on schools, hospitals and markets continue, against all basic principles of international law.

The diversion of weaponry, including from Government stockpiles, is further fuelling conflict, allowing rebels, gangs, criminal organizations, pirates, terrorist groups and insurgents to bolster their firepower. Poor weapons management is an area of alarming concern. Many States lack thorough planning and consistent attention to the safe storage, handling, transportation and disposal of their arsenals.

The recent entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) laid the foundations for a global framework of arms transfer controls, including for small arms and light weapons and ammunition. The ATT is designed to help advance international peace and security, reduce human suffering and promote cooperation, transparency and responsible action on the part of States. The ATT requires exporting States parties to ensure that their arms exports will not be used, for instance, to violate arms embargoes, fuel conflict, facilitate terrorism or engage in serious violations of international human rights or humanitarian law. I encourage all Member States to accede to the Treaty and to faithfully implement it. A universal ATT, adequately implemented, is critical to removing the tools for armed conflict. The ATT and other instruments can prevent the misuse and illicit circulation of the thousands of weapons that are often part of the roots of conflict.

My report to the Council highlights (S/2015/289) two key elements to tackle this worldwide challenge. First, we need to ensure that the use of weapons and ammunition by national security forces conforms with commitments under global treaties and instruments. That also means ensuring the proper and safe storage of weapons and ammunition. Secondly, we need further measures to combat the proliferation of illicit weapons. States must enforce arms embargoes and strengthen United Nations missions tasked with arms and ammunition identification, recordkeeping, tracing and stockpile management. States contributing troops and police can assist by deploying personnel with the relevant expertise. I also encourage greater efforts to accelerate the exchange of operational information on arms trafficking.

In all aspects of arms and ammunition management, States can make use of the tested standards and guidelines developed by the United Nations. And as an international community, we should think creatively. States may already be implementing good practices that could become a global standard. One area that deserves far more attention is ammunition. Monitoring ammunition flows can help identify sources, trafficking patterns and diversion points. It can remove source material for improvised explosive devices and interrupt the resupply of ammunition into crime and conflict areas. Cutting ammunition flows has an immediate impact on the intensity of armed activity. In situations where there is high risk to civilian populations, this should be a priority.

The causes of conflict are complex. However, weapons, ammunition and their storage facilities are physical commodities. Guns can be licensed, marked and confiscated; ammunition can be tracked, removed or destroyed; and depots can be guarded, cleared or secured. Deny access to illegal weapons and ammunition, and you deny criminals, armed groups and extremists a central means to perpetrate violence, intimidation and harm. That must be our common goal.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Al Hussein.

Mr. Al Hussein: I am delighted to see you, Madam President, presiding over the Council this month. I wish you the best of success. I am also grateful for the opportunity to address the Council on the human cost of the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons.

The bloodshed and devastation caused by these weapons never fail to elicit unanimous declarations of dismay, but when the international community is called upon to control more effectively the production and trade of small arms and light weaponry, States push for loose definitions, as well as numerous exclusions and loopholes, and enforcement remains weak. The reason is clear. The trade in small arms is a multi-billion-dollar business. And yet, the human and economic cost of armed violence also runs into the hundreds of billions of dollars. These are the weapons of the easy kill — the most portable, most easily accessible, most casual instruments of death. Even a small child can, with its tiny muscles, vanquish a life. In war, however, appallingly, it is often the child that receives the bullet.

The vast majority of victims are not the live version of the silhouetted man on a white sheet of paper holding a gun, which law enforcement and militaries the world over use for target practice. The live version is very different. The majority of bullet-ridden and mortar-blasted humans are ordinary people, not combatants in armed conflict. They tend to be among the poorest or most vulnerable members of society: older people, women, children and people with disabilities. Frequently, they are the left-behinds — people who cannot flee when danger looms because they have nowhere to go or because they are not physically able to move. Many are killed; countless others are maimed, and may be permanently disabled.

If they were to reflect reality more closely, the silhouettes used for target practice would not then be menacing gunmen, but terrified people hiding under tables, or cowering in the corners of dark rooms with their families, or lying face down in a ditch. And why? Because war is not just the clinical fulfilment of some military or strategic objective; war, in the killing zone, often means a gruesome showcasing of human cruelty, for reasons we still do not yet properly understand. Why does it have to be violent to civilians and non-combatants?

The pathologies of human behaviour have yet to determine why. But we do know that, if the oldest companion of war is war crime, its bride is the profiteer. There are simply too many who will indulge in the commerce of death and in the illicit business of arms transfers, which is undeniably damaging to human life. Yet we rarely see those responsible for facilitating and abetting serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law held accountable in any way. We must place the protection of human life and human rights at the centre of this discussion.

The contrast is also breathtakingly stark between the comfortable profits of the brokers of these weapons — not to speak the accompanying lifestyles of the more successful of them — and the victims of their use, who in the majority of cases are likely to find no recourse or remedy for the torment and disabilities these arms and weapons have caused them.

We are all aware small arms do not only make easy the taking of lives, and the maiming of lives, they also kill economies and the social bonds on which every kind of collective institution and progress rely. Their ubiquitous availability can contribute to the sustained denial of human rights, including to education and health; the lethality of criminal behaviour; the breakdown of social structures; the illicit plundering of natural resources; decreasing trade and investment; rising violence against women and girls; gang violence; the collapse of the rule of law; and a generalized sense of impunity, opening up in many parts of the world completely lawless landscapes.

My Office welcomes the convening of this meeting. We appeal to the Security Council to continue to build on resolution 2117 (2013). We also note the upcoming second open-ended meeting of the Group of Experts in a few weeks' time, and hope it will make serious progress.

The recent entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is a real source of hope, if more Member States ratify it and agree to implement it genuinely, particularly articles 6 and 7, which provide for the human rights safeguards that are the treaty's heart. The Security Council should continue to provide strong support to the ATT, and it should mandate United Nations operations to build ATT implementation capacity into their regional and national assistance, hand-in-hand with capacity-building for human rights and rule-of-law institutions.

When in came to the ATT, my predecessor, Navi Pillay, proposed to the Council in August 2014 that

> "where there are concerns about human rights in States that purchase arms, one condition of sale would be that they accept a small human rights monitoring team". (*S/PV.7247, p. 5*)

I, too, believe this form of innovative thinking deserves further elaboration. I urge the States parties to explore it, along with the members of the Security Council.

The President: I thank Mr. Al Hussein for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Diakité.

Mr. Diakité (*spoke in French*): Let me begin, Mr. President, by expressing to you and your colleagues in the Security Council my sincere gratitude for giving me this opportunity to speak to the Council today.

I am here not only in my capacity as President of the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms in Côte d'Ivoire and as a representative of our global network, the International Action Network on Small Arms, but mostly and especially as the voice of the millions of innocent victims of the illicit transfer, accumulation, diversion and misuse of small arms around the world, especially in Africa. My country, Côte d'Ivoire, and its people have suffered particularly because of this during the last decade.

I remember like it was yesterday, when this nightmare began. I was peacefully sleeping in my room at the University of Bouaké, where I was in my first year of law school, when I was abruptly awakened by weapon fire from all sides. Some frustrated individuals who had been denied Ivorian citizenship had decided to take up arms — too readily available — to make their claim. We were terrorized for days, hunted like animals, without water, without food, without receiving help, constantly living in the fear of being killed. And we were not the only ones. The rest of the inhabitants suffered as well, regardless of age, sex or status. We all paid the price, but for what? And why? When I returned to the neighbourhood, one of my neighbors was forced, in order to feed her family, to yield to the intimidation and threats of armed individuals. I will never forget the tears on her face depicting her pain and the shame of having been a victim of forced prostitution and rape.

We were all victims of those armed men, who would set up multiple barricades so that they could plunder passengers and traders of their property, and often of their lives. And we ask the question: Where do these weapons and their ammunition come from, these weapons that enable all this violence, all this suffering?

Following the post-elections armed conflict in 2010 and 2011, I personally witnessed multiple abuses, the lifeless bodies lying in the middle of the roadway, the destroyed and burned buildings and the streams of haggard and displaced refugees fleeing Abidjan by the thousands for an unknown destination, leaving behind the entire fruit of a life-time of hard work. I also experienced the consequences of the collapse of Government control, where power fell to groups of young, lawless offenders who had no difficulty getting hold of arms and ammunition and who, without any reason, would not hesitate to take life or to indulge in all forms of abuses on a terrorized population, particularly women and girls. All public infrastructure was destroyed, the population deprived of water, electricity and food. Families were separated, and hospitals were overwhelmed and unable to cope with the flood of the wounded. Many owed their salvation to the courage of some women who, at great risk to their lives, ventured out to bring a handful of cassava semolina, called attieke, to feed the families.

Electoral dispute in my country led to a strong anarchic distribution of weapons and ammunition by some political leaders and district leaders. Those weapons and their ammunition had entered the country, in violation of a United Nations arms embargo, from neighbouring countries as well as trafficking networks. The cost in human life was well over 3,000; the total cost to the country is beyond any estimation. Obviously, the ease of access to weapons and ammunition acquired by illicit means, by leakages from legal stockpiles, from military and police stock, and even by local manufacturing, were the main factors in this tragic toll. Similarly, illegal weapons and ammunition coming from the abandoned arsenals after the fall of Al-Qadhafi in Libya started to pour into the region — and presently continue to flood our region and fuel terrorist movements in Mali, the Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon.

As a consequence, democratic institutions are severely destabilized and organized crime is spreading rapidly. It is therefore urgent, if we are to avoid the entire region being engulfed in protracted and unresolvable conflicts and overwhelmed by horrific crime, that the international community mobilize to counter this problem and act quickly to curb the proliferation of such weapons in Africa and the world.

It is an undeniable fact that the illicit transfer, accumulation, diversion and misuse of small arms and their ammunition are key factors in the human costs resulting from destruction and destabilization. Every United Nations Member State must do all it can to ensure that it is meeting all relevant international obligations and commitments related to controlling the movement and misuse of small arms and light weapons and stemming the flow of arms into conflict zones.

It is more vital than ever that States be encouraged to implement the United Nations Programme of Action and the Arms Trade Treaty in order to slow if not eliminate the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. They must do more to enhance and strengthen international cooperation and assistance. That assistance can and should take many forms, from helping to ensure that stockpiles — whether in the largest national armoury or the smallest village police station — are secured, to assisting the victims and survivors of armed violence, whether conflict- or crime-related. Member States should also ensure that preventing and combating small arms and ammunition proliferation and misuse are fundamental elements of the mandates of all peacekeeping operations, and they should support the work of civil society in its efforts to combat the harmful consequences of small arms and ammunition proliferation. Civil society played a pivotal role in resolving the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire and can do so elsewhere as well.

In that regard, I would like to make the following three recommendations to the Security Council. First, all United Nations Member States should fully honour all their commitments under the Programme of Action and ensure that they follow up on its Biennial Meetings and Review Conferences on progress achieved, including the International Tracing Instrument. Secondly, all Member States should ratify the Arms Trade Treaty and implement it robustly in order to ensure the establishment of strict new international standards. Similarly, all States should ratify the Firearms Protocol. Thirdly, all States should actively promote and support a full role for women as participants and decision-makers in addressing the proliferation and misuse of small arms and ammunition, including in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace processes at all levels.

I and the many innocent victims in my community and all over the world have suffered from the terrible yet preventable reality of the misuse and proliferation of small arms and light weapons. It is up to the members of the Security Council to work with the international community to prevent others from being subjected to such horrible suffering. On behalf of all the victims, I urge every member of the Security Council to adopt a resolution on small arms and light weapons, because we perish or survive at their will.

The President: I thank Mr. Diakité for his personal testimony and his plea on behalf of so many victims.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to thank Lithuania for organizing this meeting. My thanks also go to the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Mr. Diakité for their briefings.

The current international security situation is complex and volatile. Terrorism is spreading and organized crime is on the rise. The dangers created by the illicit trade in and excessive stockpiling of small and light weapons have become more prominent and severe. Globalization and the revolution in technologies, including information technology, have added many new features to that trade. The fight against illicit trafficking in small and light weapons has become increasingly complicated and difficult. The Security Council should continue to play a positive role in strengthening international efforts to combat the illicit trade in such weapons and to prevent the damaging humanitarian consequences of their proliferation. We would like to make the following points.

First, we should take a multifaceted approach in order to address the problem in an integrated manner. The international community should learn from the lessons of history. Political and diplomatic means should be used to settle disputes in order to maintain international and regional peace and stability and eliminate the motives behind the illicit trade in small arms. Meanwhile, we should intensify our efforts in the areas of peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction in order to provide solid assistance to the countries concerned in achieving economic development and social stability and to halt the abuse of such weapons where it begins.

Secondly, the United Nations should play a major, leading role in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Every country should continue to fully implement the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in order to enhance the multilateral process in combating that trade. We hope the soon-to-be-held second Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts under the Programme of Action will bring progress on efforts to combat the illicit trade at the national, regional and international levels to new heights.

Thirdly, control at the source should be strengthened in order to break the chain of supply. National Governments have the primary responsibility in fighting the illicit trade, and all countries should comply strictly with Security Council resolutions on arms embargoes, adopting responsible policies towards the arms trade and undertaking not to transfer arms to non-State actors. Meanwhile, domestic controls should be tightened in order to prevent small arms and light weapons from flowing into illegal channels. The international community should take measures to strengthen institutions and build capacities for combating the illicit trade.

Fourthly, international cooperation should be strengthened and assistance increased. All law enforcement agencies should improve their cooperation and coordination and their relations with INTERPOL and other multilateral institutions so as to strengthen the exchange of information and practical cooperation through bilateral and multilateral channels, thus preventing the flow of small arms and light weapons into the hands of terrorists and transnational organized criminal groups. Developed countries should increase their aid to developing nations in order to improve their capacity for stockpile management, combating smuggling and confiscating and destroying illegal firearms.

The Chinese Government has always opposed the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and takes a responsible and prudent approach to the export of such weapons, abiding strictly by the principles of not undermining regional peace and stability or interfering in internal affairs of recipient countries. We do not transfer arms to countries or regions that are under Security Council arms embargoes or to non-State actors and individuals. The Chinese Government has put in place a comprehensive export control system, including end-use certificates and export licences, among other things. In recent years we have vigorously supported and taken an active part in international and regional cooperation in the fight against the illicit trade in firearms. Meanwhile, we have also dedicated ourselves to continuing to strengthen domestic legislation and enforcement.

Efforts to stop the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons are of great importance to maintaining regional peace and stability. They are the guarantee of national stability and development by building an arms-free world of peace and stability, providing for the protection of women and children and ensuring their safety and security, which is a common dream of all countries. China is ready to join the rest of the international community in an unremitting effort to promote the elimination of the illicit trade, resolve the problem of excessive stockpiles and stop the abuse of such weapons.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Mr. Diakité for their briefings.

The Russian Federation shares the growing concern around the world for the problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Each year thousands of innocent people become its victims. These types of weapons are widely used by terrorist, criminal and illegal armed groups in order to achieve their illicit ends. To prevent these weapons from reaching black markets, the coordinated efforts of the entire international community are necessary, while maintaining the central role of the United Nations.

We attach great importance to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Today, it remains the only universal specialized international instrument in the area of combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It provides for a broad range of measures for States to implement at the global, regional and national levels for the purpose of combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, preventing their being diverted into illicit trade, reaching terrorist organizations, organized crime syndicates or States subject to Security Council sanctions.

At the same time, we are convinced that the potential of the Programme of Action is far from exhausted. Much remains to be done to enhance its practical impact, especially at the national and regional levels. The implementation in practice of the approach proposed by Russia to strengthen national controls on transfers of small arms and light weapons will make it possible to strengthen the security of individual countries and whole regions coping with the severe consequences of the use of illicit small arms and light weapons.

It would be possible to significantly reduce the risk of uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons by strengthening national controls over all phases of the life cycle of such weapons, from their production to destruction. Among the various necessary measures being sought is the introduction of a ban on the delivery of all types of small arms and light weapons to unauthorized State entities, as well as the strict regulation of brokering activity, a ban on unsanctioned re-export of weapons, and an end to pirated production — that is, the production of weapons without licences or based on expired licences.

Measures aimed at significantly lowering the risks of the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons are scarcely included in the draft resolution currently being put together. Furthermore, the draft text in its current form does not reflect our approach on this topic. Bearing this in mind, the Russian Federation would not be able to support the draft resolution, if it were put to a vote.

At the same time, we have to admit that we are surprised at the methods of work of the authors of the draft, who have basically disregarded our concrete proposals. The final version of the text lacks balance on the most topical issues related to combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Furthermore, unlike resolution 2117 (2013), adopted in September 2013, which we believe remains valid, the current draft has a number of substantive innovations that infringe on the sovereignty of States, in particular the attempt to draw up some sort of blueprint for the future expansion of the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping and political missions in the area of control small arms and light weapons, although the main responsibility for fulfilling these functions within national territories falls to the Governments of the corresponding States.

In implementing decisions to authorize exemptions to arms embargoes, the Security Council sanctions committees have, based on these proposed blueprints, endowed themselves with the de facto authority to determine at their discretion the needs of countries under embargo with respect to certain types of weapons, and States and groups of experts would be encouraged to provide such information at the request of the corresponding sanctions committees. We consider this to be an attempt not only to have access to sensitive information about the defence capacities of States subject to sanctions, but also to pave the way to the unsound practice of double standards in the future.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): At the outset, I wish to congratulate the Lithuanian presidency on taking the initiative to convene today's important and far-reaching open debate of the Security Council on the human cost of the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW). My delegation also expresses our appreciation to the President for the interesting concept note on this theme (S/2015/306, annex).

I thank the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights for their briefings. I would also like in particular to express my delegation's gratitude to the representative of the West African Action Network on Small Arms, Mr. Karamoko Diakité of Côte d'Ivoire, and convey our appreciation for his valuable advocacy on this crucial matter.

Malaysia strongly believes that efforts to address the proliferation of small arms and light weapons must be taken consistent with a holistic perspective on arms control and disarmament, post-conflict peacebuilding, conflict prevention and socioeconomic development. We would further underline the need to address the root causes of the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons, including inter alia, the supply of SALW to armed groups, whether by Governments or through the black market, excessive accumulation and surplus of SALW in post-conflict situations and the growing demand for small arms and light weapons by armed groups and non-State actors.

Accordingly, we welcome today's open debate of the Council as a reflection on how the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons in armed conflicts has resulted in an alarming human cost. While the Council has also maintained a focus on non-proliferation, including on weapons of mass destruction, we are of the view that it should also give due consideration to small arms and light weapons as the main cause of death in armed conflicts.

In this regard, the Secretary-General's latest report on small arms and light weapons (S/2015/289) further reaffirms the need for concerted action on this matter. The apparent ease with which small arms and light weapons are obtained through illicit means has continued to exacerbate and prolong armed conflicts and post-conflict situations. The Council is no a stranger to depressing narratives as it discusses distinct regional situations, but we have to recognize that a common thread lies in these discussions, namely the prevalence of small arms and light weapons in these conflict areas.

Malaysia is particularly concerned about the impact of illicit small arms and light weapons on children, who, as the Secretary-General has rightly noted in his report (S/2015/289), are disproportionately affected by hostilities. In the event that children in armed conflict do not end up as victims of small arms and light weapons themselves, they can also face abduction, displacement and other forms of psychosocial distress. Even in post-conflict situations, we should not underestimate the danger posed to children by small arms and light weapons, as seen in instances where children had been killed or injured by playing with unexploded ordnance.

The proliferation of inexpensive and lightweight small arms and light weapons in conflict regions has also contributed to the recruitment of children as combatants, whether forced or otherwise. As we are painfully aware, there are many unscrupulous groups which are willing to prey on this vulnerability and fill a child's empty pair of hands with the instruments of death. It cannot be denied that the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons serves to prolong conflict and intensify its impact on children. Malaysia reiterates the Council's call for relevant parties to take measure to stem the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons, including through resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005) on children in armed conflict.

In addressing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the international community has established relevant parameters and guidelines. The 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons are key elements of that framework.

However, despite the adoption of those instruments, the marking and tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons continues to be limited and difficult, particularly in conflict or post-conflict environments. We therefore recognize the need for more capacity-building to meet the requirements and capacities of Member States related to the prevention of illicit trading in small arms and light weapons. That includes increased facilitation of technology transfer to developing countries, upon their request, with respect to physical security and stockpile management, as well as marking and tracing capacities. We believe that would significantly boost the implementation of the Programme of Action at the national level.

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which Malaysia signed on 26 September 2013 and entered into force in late 2014, also stands as a landmark instrument. As countries begin to implement the ATT, they need to hold fast to the principle of ensuring that they do so in a consistent, objective and non-discriminatory manner. That principle will ensure that all countries will be able to work together to close any gap, remove any loophole and bring interpretations and implementation closer to the ultimate goal of establishing the highest possible common international standards for regulating the international trade in conventional arms. That applies to today's discussion in the context of ensuring that the implementation of national obligations will contribute to reducing the human cost of the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons.

One element that my delegation considers to be a future task for the Council is the linkage between the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Security Council. The PBC is well placed to play an effective role in post-conflict disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and could also work closely with other United Nations entities to ensure that peacebuilding processes effectively complement one another. Going forward, we hope that the Council will consider the merits of interfacing with the PBC, not only on DDR, but also through country-specific initiatives on community security and conflict prevention, which can be more attuned to local concerns regarding small arms and light weapons.

Mrs. Kawar (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing and his report (S/2015/289), of which we take note. I would also like to thank the High Commissioner for Human Rights and commend the work of his Office. I thank Mr. Diakité for his briefing.

The growing illicit trade in small arms and light weapons throughout the world, particularly in hotbeds of tension, in addition to their inextricable link to terrorist organizations and drug traffickers, requires those of us concerned with maintaining international peace and security to detect the signs of such activity and to dismantle all illegal operations, even as we work to halt the arms race among weapons-producing States. Our firm belief in the need for States to use and manufacture small arms and light weapons for self-defence and to defend their citizens, as well as in the legitimate right of all peoples to self-determination, including those chafing under the yoke of occupation, does not run counter to attempts to halt the illicit arms trade. We are dutybound to pursue our efforts to control and overcome a scourge that affects us all, in particular societies suffering from the illicit proliferation of such weapons. The illicit and illegitimate use of small arms and light weapons can be traced to the growing trade in such arms by untrustworthy groups that find it all too easy to obtain them in some parts of the world.

We are well aware of the gravity and repercussions of the problem. Terrorists and criminal organizations view small arms and light weapons as a tool that enables them to pursue their illegitimate goals in a number of ways, often in the context of a culture that, in some societies, as is well known, favours such possession. All States and Governments must therefore try to change the prevailing societal and cultural attitudes towards such activities and promote the principle of the rule of law so that State institutions will be able to effectively protect their citizens societies.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has led to the proliferation of conflicts that have been accompanied by an alarming number of civilian casualties. The number of civilian victims of violence in armed conflict represents the visible face of the illicit market in small arms and light weapons and of their abuse. Despite the dark, invisible side of the illicit arms trade, its effects can be seen in its humanitarian consequences, especially on young people, women and children. It is vital to offer assistance to States enduring the consequences and the medium- and long-term effects of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, upon their request, and to assist them in developing national strategies to control them, with the participation of all sectors of society at the local level. Civil society and mass media have a pivotal role to play in addressing that phenomenon.

States must extend their authority across the full span of their national territory and implement international humanitarian law and human rights law with the aim of curbing the proliferation of such weapons. Alongside international efforts to curb the flow of small arms and light weapons, decisive new laws aimed at punishing the illegal acquisition of such weapons must be enacted. We continue to emphasize the need to adopt further controls to monitor the weapons market and to honestly implement the relevant international treaties. At the regional level, neighbouring States must continue mutual cooperation and coordination to promote border security.

In the various forums that address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, Jordan has emphasized its commitment to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and to pressing ahead with the development of national legislation to combat such trade.

To conclude, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is not a cause but rather the result of numerous factors. Conflicts must therefore be resolved in a just manner. Many crucial issues demand to be addressed. We will not reach our destination so long as international peace and security continue to be seriously and systematically threatened in many parts of the world by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I thank Lithuania for organizing this open debate. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, High Commissioner for Human Rights; and Mr. Karamoko Diakité, President of the Côte d'Ivoire chapter of the West African Action Network on Small Arms, for their statements.

Chad, which has long been ravaged by civil wars and has been a victim of repeated foreign aggression, is better poised than anyone to give an account of the devastating consequences of the illicit trafficking, destabilizing accumulation and diversion of small arms and light weapons. Africa is one of the most severely affected regions in the world by the destabilizing impact of small arms and light weapons. The consequences of the abusive use of such weapons are immeasurable. They prolong and fuel crises and armed conflicts, with their toll of misfortune and the loss of human lives. There are waves of internally displaced persons who are often the victims of atrocities, such as rape, forced disappearance, torture and so on. Based on certain sources, the human lives lost because of small arms and light weapons exceed half a million per year. Furthermore, the proliferation of weapons, whether they are linked to crime or conflict, destabilize societies, causes human suffering, inverts the pyramid of values and gives rise to a culture of violence.

Chad is extremely concerned by the scale and consequences of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Accoding to some statistics, approximately 1 billion of these devices are circulating globally. They are used mostly by non-State actors such as rebel and terrorist groups, pirates, drug cartels, private security firms, mercenaries, et cetera. The international community must redouble its efforts to counter the long-lasting devastating effects of the abusive use of small arms and light weaopns. In that regard, it is critical that we develop comprehensive mechanisms to combat this phenomenon internationally and nationally.

At the national level, it is up to each State to assume its responsibility to address the potential for the illicit use, diversion and circulation of weapons. States must ensure that the arms and ammunition in their possession are properly used and that they are securely stockpiled. They must ensure that there are systems to manage and monitor arsenals. Because of its painful experience of conflict, in 2008 Chad established a national disarmament commission that has carried out operations to collect illegally acquired weapons throughout the whole of its national territory. Those operations have enabled us to recover thousands of weapons, firearms and ammunition alike. This collection of weapons was additionally supported by a long campaign to raise awareness among the public about the dangers of small arms and light weapons. Practical measures have also been taken to step up border-controls and exchange intelligence with neighbouring countries. A joint-force of 4,000 Chadian and Sudanese soldiers has been deployed along our common as part of this fight. Along the same lines, on 25 March, Chad signed the Arms Trade Treaty and deposited its ratification instrument with the Secretariat.

At the international level, we must deal with the underlying causes for the circulation of arms and ammunition by combating the flow of such arms, especially in conflict areas. In that regard, effective measures must be taken in order to prohibit the unscrupulous manufacture and brokering of weapons — whether they be State or non-State actors — so that they do not profit from death and chaos, especially in the Middle East and Africa. In so doing, they fuel conflicts to achieve their ends with no consideration for human life. Chad condemns the transfer of arms and ammunition, which more often than not, flies in the face of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. Such transfers lead to civilian deaths, especially among women and children, destabilize States and impede long-term governance, while complicating the resolution of conflicts.

In the same way that we are endeavouring to put in place laws and arrangements to monitor and control weapons in our own countries, we must also identify, locate and hold responsible the State and non-State actors involved in the illicit transfer of arms and ammunition. The recommendations on marking, registering and tracing of small arms and light weapons will not be effective unless all States commit in good faith to putting and end to the illegal supply of arms and ammunition. Furthermore, it is urgent that we ensure, by way of an international legal instrument, that non-State and State manufacturers, brokers, importers and traffickers are held accountable for the destabilizing illicit transfer, accumlation and diversion of small arms and light weapons.

We regret the fact that certain prominent members of the Council oppose the inclusion in the draft resolution under discussion of a provision on the inadmissible nature of the transfer of small arms and light weapons to non-State actors. Chad hopes that these legitimate concerns on the issue will be taken into account in the final version of the text that is currently being discussed. The issue of small arms and light weapons has been on the Council's agenda since 1999, and it is our view that this organ, vested with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, must be find a solution, in particular to the critical issue of transferring weapons to non-State actors.

Finally, the human cost of illicit transfers and of destabilizing accumulation and diversion of light weapons is intolerable. States must assume their responsibilities and do everything in their power to prevent and put an end to these activities, which jeopardize international peace and security. The United Nations must also do its part to advance this effort. We therefore call on the Secretary-General to take into account in his upcoming biennial report the issue of the illicit transfer of small arms and light weaopns to non-State actors.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): I would like to thank you very much, Madam President, for convening this open debate on a subject of profound contemporary significance. I also thank you for the deeply analytical concept note (S/2015/306, annex) that you have provided as a compass for our deliberations. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the Secretary-General for his briefing as well his detailed report on Small Arms and Light Weapons (S/2015/289). Our appreciation also goes to Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, for his soul-searching briefing, as well as to Mr. Karamoko Diakité for stirring our moral conscience.

The world today is witnessing mindless killings and despicable violence occasioned by terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaida, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Al-Nusra Front. We all know that what drives and sustains their mindless behaviour is the unbridled proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The pervasive misuse of weapons in conflicts worldwide is also an immediate driving factor in fostering the displacement of peoples. That can be seen in conflict dynamics in various theatres of war where such weapons are readily available. I believe that we must employ a more dynamic approach to the elimination of the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons and ready access to ammunition. The illicit supply of small arms and light weapons to non-State actors has been a major factor of political instability and insecurity in Africa. That is precisely why we deem it a vital necessity for the Security Council, and indeed the international community, to take strident, concrete and effective measures to prevent non-State actors from acquiring weapons.

The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects remains the key United Nations initiative with a comprehensive approach aimed at addressing the scourge that the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons has become. It needs to be emphasized, however, that the realization of the full potential of the Programme of Action lies in the full synergy of its trilateral implementation mechanism.

Nigeria has remained consistent with regard to the need for a regional approach to combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The adoption of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, signed in Abuja in June 2006, and the ECOWAS 1998 Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa are significant responses forged by regional contributions to the global challenge that is posed by the proliferation of illicit small arms. The fact that an estimated 8 million small arms are in circulation in the West African subregion, of which about 80,000 are estimated to be held by insurgent groups and other non-State actors, underscores the need for ECOWAS member States to work relentlessly together to deal with the problem of small arms and light weapons.

Nigeria shares the view of the Secretary-General that the diversion of small arms is a major problem across the world, which contributes to insecurity and is linked to the activities of mobs terrorizing people's homes, rebel attacks on civilians and peacekeepers, organized crime and terrorism. It is therefore crucial that attention be paid to the factors causing the diversion of small arms, including improper controls, unauthorized retransfer, thefts from poorly secured stockpiles, handouts to armed groups and other non-State actors in barter exchanges involving, in particular, natural resources.

Nigeria believes that the support of the Security Council for the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects should be reflected in the adoption and implementation of practical measures to eliminate illicit small arms. In addition to the measures envisaged in resolution 2117 (2013), the Council should continue to pursue genuine efforts to prevent conflicts and support the pacific settlement of disputes in order to remove or, at least, minimize the risk of armed conflict.

There is also a need to support the creation of a political atmosphere that is conducive to harmonious relationships at the national, subregional and regional levels. It is particularly important to foster a sense of belonging among people in countries that are susceptible to political instability. Nigeria urges the Security Council to aim for and encourage, with greater intensity, structures and processes that promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law where they do not exist, and their consolidation in unstable political environments where they already exist. Above all, the international community should vigorously address, in an integrated manner, the economic, security and developmental challenges faced by countries that are vulnerable to armed conflict. Such measures would, in our view, obviate the recourse to the illicit acquisition of small arms and light weapons in order to pursue political goals.

Nigeria welcomes the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty on 24 December 2014. As one of the first countries in Africa to ratify the Treaty, we are firmly committed to meeting our obligations under it. We are of the belief that it could make a vital contribution to international peace and security and the stability of nations, including the reduction of human suffering. We urge more States, in particular large exporters and importers of conventional weapons, to ratify and accede to the Treaty, which would bring us closer to the overall objective of its universalization.

Nigeria reiterates its commitment to participate in all initiatives at the subregional, regional and global levels aimed at addressing, in a comprehensive manner, the illicit transfer and trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): Madam President, I am pleased and honoured to take part in this debate under your leadership. I look forward to getting to know my other colleagues on the Council as soon as possible.

The problem of small arms and light weapons is extremely important but also very difficult. One reason that it is difficult is that it is a hard issue to consider in the abstract. So much depends on the conditions in the society, country or region where the problem arises. Take my own country as an example. On a per-capita basis, New Zealanders have quite an arsenal of weapons in private homes, but they are mostly for recreational purposes, and the use of firearms in social unrest, crime and domestic violence is relatively rare in my country, although, sadly, it is on the increase. Our police are still not routinely armed when they are on the beat. That is possible because the history, the economic and social conditions and the physical location of our country have meant that guns are not a major social problem — at least not yet. But that is not the case in many countries that are awash in firearms and where firearms are all too often a weapon of first resort. We do not buy the bumper sticker that people, not guns, kill people. Guns are a problem in their own right, and they warrant our attention. So, too, does the issue of ammunition, as the Secretary-General has reminded us.

Experience has shown that firearms can make a bad situation much worse; the presence and use of a lot of firearms can tear the fabric of society, threaten the security of a country and destabilize a region. Even a small number of guns in the wrong hands can have devastating consequences, especially in vulnerable communities. Too often, the innocent suffer the most, children and caregivers — usually women — as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Mr. Diakité have graphically pointed out.

There are numerous examples from all parts of the world: from South and North America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Western and Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia. My own region, the Pacific, is also not immune, as has been shown in the Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. It is the ubiquity and seriousness of the problem that has led to international efforts to control the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, in particular the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and, most significantly, the negotiation, adoption and entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, which New Zealand has ratified.

New Zealand hailed the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty as one of the most important arms-controls agreements adopted in recent years. That achievement, together with the adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, rank as signal successes. They stand in stark contrast to the meagre returns in other disarmament negotiations — a situation currently under critical scrutiny in an adjacent chamber.

The Council has an important and long-standing role in this issue, as it has shown in the imposition of arms embargoes and the adoption of measures to disarm and demobilize combatants, secure the collection of weapons and prevent their diversion. In resolution 2117 (2013), the Council provided a framework for a more consistent approach to this set of issues. We sincerely hope that the Council will be able, this week, to build on that achievement by adopting a further resolution that will: promote a more integrated approach to addressing small-arms and light-weapons issues across the United Nations agenda; encourage enhanced support from United Nations agencies to host countries in countering illicit transfers and the destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons; and strengthen the implementation of arms embargoes.

We commend Lithuania for its concept note (S/2015/306, annex) and for its preparation of a comprehensive draft resolution. New Zealand is concerned that there is serious contention over one aspect of the draft resolution, namely, the language bearing on illicit transfers to non-State actors, which was not included in resolution 2117 (2013). For its part, New Zealand could accept any of the formulations under discussion, and we believe that, with a modicum of goodwill, a solution can be found. While recognizing the strength of the positions in play, we are concerned that a battle over an issue on which none of the key arms-exporting protagonists can plead a clean record threatens to subvert the much larger gains that this draft resolution represents for the wider United Nations membership, especially the small and the vulnerable, who suffer the consequences and reap none of the rewards of the global arms trade.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would, first of all, like to thank Lithuania for having organized an open debate on the central issue of small arms and light weapons. The statements made by the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights help us to gauge the real scale of the problem. I would also like to thank Mr. Diakité for his briefing on the situation in West Africa — a region that is, unfortunately, particularly affected by the proliferation of small weapons — and for his very powerful testimony. We will certainly heed his call.

France also associates itself fully with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

Today's debate is based on an alarming fact. According to the Small Arms Survey research project, over 800 million small arms and light weapons are in circulation around the world. These weapons have caused over half a million deaths each year and are responsible for almost 90 per cent of the victims of armed conflicts. Make no mistake — today, small arms are by far the most lethal weapons in the world. Their main victims, unfortunately, are too often civilians, among whom women and children are particularly affected.

The proliferation of such weapons also fuels regional conflicts and benefits terrorist groups, which thus armed can continue their destabilizing and barbarous activities. It also sows the seeds for organized crime, which no longer knows any borders. And this phenomenon is constantly evolving. Porous borders in conflict zones, combined with advances in technology, communications, finance and transportation, have fostered relations among terrorist networks and criminal groups operating internationally, making the fight against this scourge even more complex. Lastly, by encouraging the continuation of conflicts and the destabilization of entire regions the illicit trafficking in those deadly weapons presents a major obstacle to the socioeconomic development of the most fragile States.

In the face of this dark scenario, the international community cannot stand idly by. France is also aware of the particular responsibility that falls upon it as an arms-exporting country. That is why we, together with our partners, have joined the front ranks in the combat against the illicit trafficking in small arms. The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted by consensus in 2001, was the first cornerstone of this edifice, providing a general framework for efforts aimed at containing the flow of small arms. The International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, which was authored by France and Switzerland, further bolstered that framework in 2006. We would now like to see the Programme of Action, which is still legally non-binding, be strengthened in the years to come.

In the face of such a scourge, which defies the authority of States, the adoption of legally binding instruments is indeed essential. That is why we were among the first, together with our European partners, to promote an Arms Trade Treaty that is commensurate with the scale of this challenge, and which today has become transnational. We worked together to achieve a demanding and innovative treaty that, first, imposes a new global standard for the trade in conventional arms, including ammunition; secondly, triggers, for the first time, the responsibility of exporting States; and, thirdly, accords a paramount role to human rights and international humanitarian law by banning the export of all kinds of arms when there is a risk of genocide or crimes against humanity. Together with African States, we fought to make sure that the Treaty ultimately included small arms and light weapons in its scope of application.

The historic adoption of the Treaty by the General Assembly in April 2013 (resolution 67/234 B) and its entry into force last December will contribute to providing solutions to the illicit trafficking in small arms. France is proud to have been among the first to sign and ratify that treaty. In that regard, we call on all Member States to sign and ratify the treaty, which will strengthen international peace and security.

Other instruments exist, and they must, of course, be supported. In the framework of the European Union, for a long time we adopted common measures against the stockpiling and destabilizing proliferation of small arms, as well as a common position on controlling the brokering of arms deals. Finally, we also participate in the financing of innovative instruments, such as the iTRACE programme and the INTERPOL iARMS system.

We welcome the fact that Lithuania has decided to continue the deliberation within the Security Council launched two years ago by Australia, which led to the adoption of resolution 2117 (2013). That resolution served as a major step forward by actively involving all the instruments of our Organization in order to better combat the destabilizing and illicit trafficking in such weapons in all regions of the world.

The efforts undertaken by Lithuania with a view to adopting a new resolution on the subject are, in that context, extremely important. The fight against the trafficking in small arms should indeed be a cross-cutting topic in all the areas of United Nations activities: within the sanctions committees and the panels of expert in charge of monitoring embargoes, but also within peacekeeping operations and special political missions, when that is deemed useful and necessary. Structures within the United Nations involved in combating terrorism can also play an important role, and we hope that the issue will be systematically taken into account in the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Sanctions Monitoring Team of the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee.

The Secretary General's report on small arms (S/2015/289), circulated a few weeks ago, provides important clarifications and additional recommendations that we will also need to implement. We would like, as recommended by the Secretary-General, for this issue to remain on the agenda of the Council.

Control over all arms is the primary condition for security in the world. For France, this is not just a conviction, it is a historical commitment. No doubt because our country has been the theatre of many wars, we have been, and continue to be, one of the countries that is most favourable to disarmament. We will continue this fight as long as necessary, together with the international community.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): My Government very much welcomes this meeting and the greater attention being paid to the danger posed by the illicit trafficking in and stockpiling and use of small arms and light weapons. I would like to thank Lithuania for its leadership on this issue and also to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/289). We also appreciate the briefings today by Mr. Diakité and by the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Today, I would like to touch on three essential issues. The scope of the small-arms and light-weapons problem and the violence that results, the importance of stockpile security and management, and what we need to do to disrupt supply routes. A conservative estimate of the official global trade in small arms and light weapons is approximately $1 billion annually. Black markets alone are estimated to account for another $200 million. Estimates suggest there are over 600 million small arms and light weapons in circulation worldwide. Readily available and easy to use, small arms and light weapons have been the primary or sole tools of violence in almost every recent conflict dealt with by the United Nations and, too often, they are being used by children who are too young, too vulnerable, exploited and in danger. Stockpiles of arms and ammunitions are widely available. Such weapons are so small, so cheap, so convenient and easy to use and transfer around the world. It is all too common to see a teenage boy walking around with a gun almost as heavy as he is.

We do not need to look far to see the impact of and immense misery caused by this deadly phenomenon. Large caches of weapons available in Darfur, Libya and South Sudan have exacerbated conflicts in those countries and in others throughout Africa and the Middle East. Illicit weapons have a way of travelling and where they go, they wreak havoc. Weapons from Libya alone have been used in Egypt, Gaza, the Niger, Somalia and Syria.

When South Sudan became independent in 2011, it was estimated that there were 3.2 million small arms in circulation, which is one gun for every fourth person. We have seen their deadly toll, including widespread and systematic killings of civilians and targeting of individuals based on ethnicity, often in their homes, churches and hospitals. In Darfur, terror is wrought by a Government that continues to complement indiscriminate bombings with ground attacks conducted by its well-armed rapid-support force. Just three months ago, the Security Council deplored the routine conveyance of weapons and ammunition into Darfur, but little has changed. Despite the presence of a large peacekeeping operation, guns continue to flow and terror reigns supreme.

The Secretary-General is right to highlight in his report the need to address stockpile security and management on an urgent basis. The United States has been among the leading donors in helping Member States to secure their stockpiles of conventional arms and ammunition and to destroy those weapons no longer required for national defence. We have supported programmes that have destroyed approximately 1.6 million excess or poorly secured weapons and over 90,000 tons of munitions worldwide. We also continue to cooperate with law enforcement authorities around the world in tracing illicitly trafficked small arms and light weapons. The United States has also worked with the Organization of American States and the Nairobi-based Regional Centre on Small Arms to assist Member States in marking their State-held stockpiles.

That leads me to a point about the imperative of controlling and regulating illicit weapons supply routes. More robust enforcement of Security Council embargoes and sanctions regimes by all Member States is essential if the prohibitions already in place are to be successful. Related to that, improvements in export and import controls would mitigate the risk of illegal transfers. Currently, bogus end-use certifications and intentional diversions of legal arms transfers are used to channel arms to Governments and others in violation of national and international laws. Establishing high standards for end-use certification, more robust post-export verification by arms-exporting countries and appropriate regulation of commercial arms brokers would all contribute greatly to addressing the illicit movement of small arms and light weapons.

We must also redouble our commitment to strong disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) measures in post-conflict situations. Effective DDR, including the expeditious destruction of war surpluses, can ensure that the tools of today's wars do not fuel conflict somewhere else tomorrow. Nations have the right to defend themselves and their citizens. Small arms and light weapons are often manufactured legally and appropriately, traded and retained for legitimate and lawful purposes. That must be respected and protected. But when legal controls break down and, through weaknesses of governance, corruption or other illicit lawless activity, deadly weapons fall into the wrong hands, the victims are too often too many vulnerable innocents.

This debate has helpfully laid out the grave problems that small arms and light weapons pose to international peace and security. But it has also offered practical and effective solutions, and in that vein, we support Lithuania's draft resolution on the issue and urge our colleagues to do so as well.

The threat posed by cynical profiteers who trade in an illicit economy of corruption merit our attention. The misery wreaked by the illicit movement of small arms demands our focus. Children, whom the High Commissioner powerfully observed with their small muscles can vanquish a life, are too often instrumentalized and victimized by our failure to effectively address the illicit movement and unlawful proliferation of small arms. The United States is deeply committed to continuing our work together to address that challenge and advance our collective goal of forging a more peaceful and secure world.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Madam President, for having organized this debate. I also thank the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the President of the Côte d'Ivoire chapter of the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms for their excellent briefings.

I fully endorse the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

As we hold this debate, the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is convened in this same United Nations Headquarters. Curiously, however, as the Secretary-General stated a few years ago, the true weapons of mass destruction are small arms and light weapons, because they are the weapons that have caused the highest number of deaths in recent times. One of the main principles of peaceful coexistence among States and the maintenance of international peace and security is the State's established monopoly on the use of force. Nevertheless, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction could challenge the State's monopoly. I wish to examine that thought from three points of view.

The first is terrorism. I am convinced that one of the causes of the increase in terrorism today is precisely due to the increase in the trade of small arms and light weapons. I believe that it would not be possible for terrorist groups to control broad swaths of territory in increasingly large areas of the Middle East and elsewhere if they did not possess a large number of small arms and light weapons. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is thus one of the causes of the increase of terrorism today.

The second perspective is the protection of civilians. Unfortunately, the victims of the illicit trade of small arms are civilians, particularly in areas where the State is the weakest. Where borders are distant from the State nucleus of control are precisely those areas where civilians are most affected.

Thirdly, as the High Commissioner vigorously and emotionally stated, women and children are particularly affected. Women are often victims of sexual violence, both during and following conflicts. Sadly, as Council members are aware, children are recruited as child soldiers and sometimes used as human shields and instruments of war.

What is the solution to all those problems? States have the solution. States must do more to establish better controls over the end use of weapons. That is clearly stated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/289) and in the reports of the Group of Experts. To better combat the illicit trafficking of weapons of small arms, it is essential to have good international cooperation, as the Ambassador of China expressed so well.

In conclusion, I would like to welcome the new Ambassador of New Zealand and fully subscribe to his statement regarding the need for a new Security Council resolution. I think it would be necessary and appropriate to have a new resolution to provide continuity to resolution 2117 (2013). Such a resolution is necessary because it would establish better international control, more effectively prevent access by terrorists to small arms, and ultimately lead to a more secure world. Finally, I fully support the efforts of Lithuania to ensure that the draft resolution can be adopted as soon as possible. I trust that the Council members can reach an agreement on it soon.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to thank you, Madam President, for convening this important open debate. We are also grateful for the briefings and presence of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein; and Mr. Karamoko Diakité.

There are no exact figures on the number of small arms and light weapons currently in circulation globally. Some sources estimate that at least 875 million small arms and light weapons are available, many of them in the hands of non-State individuals and entities. Reports are that between 7 and 8 million of those weapons are produced every year. The legal international sales of such weapons bring in at least $8.5 billion annually. In addition, illicit sales, according to the World Bank, account for up to an additional 20 per cent.

Hundreds of thousands of small arms and light weapons, including heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, ground-to-air missiles, portable anti-aircraft systems, portable rocket launchers, rifles and handguns, are diverted every year into the illicit market and to non-State actors, including terrorist groups. The diversion of those weapons exacerbates armed violence and fuels conflicts, civil wars and transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking, trafficking in women and children, and it undermines respect for international humanitarian law and human rights.

At least 508,000 persons die violent deaths every year, including approximately 60,000 women and girls, and most of them are victims of small arms and light weapons. Such are the statistics of the culture and the logic of death.

Although the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has been a constant for decades in North Africa and the Middle East, recent reports on the subject point to an unprecedented escalation of the phenomenon throughout the entire region. There is no doubt that military intervention, war and the collapse of institutions in Iraq and Libya, as well as the escalation of the conflict in Syria, are the key factors explaining this staggering increase in the trafficking and flow of small arms and light weapons throughout the entire region.

The Secretary-General's 2013 report on small arms and light weapons (S/2013/503) referred to the impact caused by the collapse of the Libyan State and its terrible consequences for the security of neighbouring countries. The report demonstrated that munitions and explosives had ended up in at least 12 countries of the Maghreb, the Sahel, the Levant and the Horn of Africa. It also documented the terrible impact that the military intervention and war in Iraq had had on the security of the Middle East, leading to the collapse of the country's institutions and army, with the subsequent proliferation in the flow of weapons and explosives of all types.

Within their capacities, States can and must manage and monitor their arsenals appropriately; promote cooperation mechanisms, mark firearms when they are being manufactured and imported; prohibit the export or transfer of unmarked small arms and light weapons; penalize illicit trafficking in those weapons; and enforce law. For that reason, the collapse of States and the disappearance of their institutions play a decisive role in aggravating the problem we are discussing today. The staggering increase in the flow and illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons in North Africa and the Middle East, with its terrible toll in violence, impunity, crimes against humanity and massive human rights violations, is one of the terrible consequences of political destabilization, interventionism and the wars in Iraq, Syria and Libya.

In addition to the problem caused by the collapse of States and institutions in the region, there is another element that we must address, namely, the promotion and proliferation of non-State armed groups as an instrument of political destabilization and fomenting war as a mechanism for overthrowing Governments. Many non-State actors in North Africa and the Middle East receive small arms and light weapons from sponsoring States. Each weapon that lands in the hands of non-State actors in such countries as Iraq, Libya and Syria stokes barbarity, war, cruelty, suffering and the death of innocent persons.

There is a very thin line between non-State actors and terrorist groups. There are armed and extremist groups that act with absolute disdain for human life and human rights, that, once they are given small arms and light weapons of all kinds, acquire significant military capacity and, more important, huge lethal capacity to deal death to every nook and cranny of the region. It is for that reason that we are very concerned that major small arms and light weapons-producing countries have refused to include a prohibition on the transfer of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, to non-State actors in the framework of previous negotiations on this issue at the United Nations. That has created a large legal vacuum that allows them to continue to supply small arms and light weapons to their political allies throughout the world.

The Security Council has a clear definition of non-State actors. Furthermore, we have resolution 1540 (2004), which establishes a valuable precedent for the prohibition of the transfer of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors. We thus have enough legal and political elements to extend the scope of the prohibition on the sale and trafficking in small arms and light weapons to non-State actors and terrorist groups.

Whoever supplies small arms and light weapons to non-State actors — whether they be militias or democratic opposition movements in countries in conflict, in wars or in processes of political destabilization, and whatever their name or motive, in societies overwhelmed by poverty, inequalities, exclusion and various forms of social discrimination — are stoking those conflicts and creating conditions for an unthinkable expansion of violence, suffering and death, as is unfortunately the case today in many of our brother countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

It would be an extraordinary contribution to the preservation of peace, the protection of human rights and the promotion of international law if the Security Council, in the context of this open debate, and given the situation of humanitarian tragedy, conflicts and wars besetting North African and Middle Eastern countries, were to take a decisive step as a firm expression of our political will to adopt a draft resolution that clearly prohibits the sale, supply, trafficking or transfer of small arms and light weapons, provided that the draft resolution includes non-State actors and terrorist groups.

We would like to insist on the fact that the prohibition must encompass non-State actors and terrorist groups. This provision cannot be avoided by resorting to double standards and excuses. It is particularly important, given that it is those entities that are today acting with full impunity, causing chaos, death and suffering to the most vulnerable and to the peoples of these regions beset by violence. This is an matter of political will for the parties that have the most responsibility to bear on this issue.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this important open debate on small arms and light weapons and for your leadership on this issue. I welcome the briefings by the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Prince Zeid. I also thank Karamoko Diakité, for sharing his personal experiences of the horrific impact that these weapons can have.

By the time I finish delivering this statement, six more people will have been killed as a direct result of small arms and light weapons. The human cost of these weapons is astonishing owing to their illicit transfer, destabilizing influence and misuse. Every year, enough ammunition is manufactured to kill every single person in the world twice over. Every year, 8 million new weapons enter into circulation. When States fail to control the supply and sale of these weapons, they not only jeopardize the safety and security of innocent people across the world, they also fuel instability and threaten international peace and security. Therefore, the need for collective action is clear. In 2013, the Council spoke on the issue for the first time. Today, we return under the Lithuanian presidency to the issue to reflect on how far we have come in addressing this scourge, and what more needs to be done.

The United Kingdom welcomes the draft resolution proposed by the presidency. It aims to strengthen the international community's ability to counter the challenges posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and to build on resolution 2117 (2013). It would help to improve the United Nations work and support the Arms Trade Treaty. We place a high priority on addressing the threats posed by small arms and light weapons, and believe that there are three key areas where we can contribute.

First, we support greater efforts to ensure effective stockpile management, removal and destruction. Proper storage prevents the flow of these weapons into the hands of those who seek to misuse them. It helps curtail an illicit economy where supply feeds demand, and it helps ensure safe storage and removal, preventing incidents like the one in Libya in November 2013, in which over 40 people were killed in an arms depot explosion. Indeed, it is Libya that presents the greatest concern to my Government on the issue of small arms. The vast, unsecured arms and ammunition of the Al-Qadhafi era are now fuelling the instability and violence facing the country and the region, and it is this instability that has allowed human traffickers and criminal gangs to thrive and send thousands of migrants to their deaths in the Mediterranean.

That is why the United Kingdom has planned to commit over $30 million to assist Libya with arms and ammunition management. We are providing a senior disarmament adviser to work with the United Nations and the Libyans, and we stand ready to increase our efforts to match the scale of the challenge. A political solution remains vital to this effort, and we reiterate our support for Special Envoy León. We urge all sides to engage in talks to agree a national unity Government and implement a ceasefire.

Secondly, the United Kingdom will continue to champion the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty. As the world's first legally binding treaty regulating the international trade in conventional arms, it shows how much we can achieve when we work together, so let us seize the momentum it has created. It is a historic treaty and it has the ability to change the lives of those most affected by the supply of illegal small arms and light weapons.

To do so, we should ensure that the core structure and functions of the Treaty are effective and cost-efficient. We look forward to negotiating the rules of procedure for the Treaty, establishing a secretariat and encouraging open and accessible transparency reporting. As we approach the first conference of States parties in August, we will continue to lobby our international partners to support and accede to the Treaty. We want as many countries as possible to join us. We stand ready to offer our expertise, where possible and appropriate, to any State that wants to accede, yet lacks the capacity to do so.

Finally, let us not lose sight of the disproportionate and distressing impact that small arms and light weapons have on women and children. As the Secretary-General makes clear in his report (S/2015/289), sexual and gender-based violence is often perpetrated by individuals and militias armed with these weapons. In this fifteenth anniversary year of resolution 1325 (2000), we welcome the report's recommendation to give greater recognition to the impact of these weapons on women and children. But women can also play a key role in resolving these problems. Women can help combat and eradicate the illicit transfer, the destabilising accumulation and the misuse of small arms. They can do so by participating in all programmes, planning and implementation processes, including at grass-roots level. In the United Kingdom's national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000), we pledge that women will play a key role to control the use of small arms and light weapons, and we call on other Members to do the same.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): I would like first of all to congratulate you, Madam, on your presidency and to thank you for organizing this debate on an issue of the utmost importance, given its harmful consequences to the lives of so many people.

We thank the Secretary-General for his insightful and detailed report on this issue (S/2015/289), and High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein for his briefing. I also thank Mr. Karamoko Diakité for sharing with the Council his direct experience of what it means to live with conflict and violence resulting from the proliferation of small arms.

Unfortunately, many small weapons fall into the wrong hands, resulting in severe damage of alarming proportions, the deaths of innocent people, violations of human rights and huge destruction of property. In many cases, perpetrators target even United Nations peacekeepers supporting peace processes in several Member States. Additionally, weapons are supplied or sold to non-State actors to fuel conflicts against established authorities and destabilize entire regions and societies, leading in the final resort to the creation of terrorist groups and armed criminal networks.

Angola was the victim of such deeds for many years. An Angola non-State actor was for many years armed and funded to challenge State authority, causing death and despair that we were able to neutralize only thanks to the support of the international community and the resilience of the Angolan people and its will to live in peace and freedom. Given the experience we have lived through so recently in building a State founded on the rule of law, as well as the situation prevailing in so many African countries and other parts of the world beset with conflict, I think we have, both as the Council and individually, the moral duty and political responsibility to openly oppose the supply of small arms and light weapons to non-State actors, in particular. Small arms in the hands of such people have been the real weapons of mass destruction.

It is alarming that, as the direct result of more than 250 armed conflicts and acts of violence recorded over the past decade throughout the world, as reported by the Secretary-General, nearly 55,000 people have lost their lives every year and many thousands more have been displaced from their areas of origin. Even more alarming is the fact that, in many of these armed conflicts, thousands of children have been recruited, used sexually and forced to commit acts of violence. The extensive availability of small arms and their ammunition is a key facilitator of the destabilization caused by armed conflicts, as well as organized transnational crime and terrorism.

The trade and illicit flows of these weapons, which fall too easily into the hands of criminal terrorists, pirates and other armed groups, are the main cause of the devastating situations prevailing in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, Mali and the Central African Republic, among other countries. Corruption, theft and the lack of appropriate mechanisms for the management and control of weapons stockpiles, particularly in the disarmament phase, have worsened the proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

We therefore welcome the entry into force in December 2014 of the Arms Trade Treaty, which we signed in September 2013. The Treaty constitutes a global control system for the transfer of weapons, including small arms and light weapons. The Treaty also complements and consolidates other legal instruments, namely, the United Nations Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition. In that context, we also welcome the role of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its International Tracing Instrument. We would also like to highlight the role played by the Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament and by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in the fight against the proliferation of illegal weapons, as well as by other actors that have directly or indirectly contributed to preventing weapons from falling into the hands of non-State actors, rebel groups, criminal organizations, pirates, terrorist groups and others.

As a country that experienced a devastating civil was that lasted for more than 30 years, the Government of Angola unequivocally supports all the efforts of the United Nations and of the international community with a view to preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Following the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty, considerable progress has been made in our country with respect to legislative and administrative procedures, including the passing of a new law on private security companies that aims to restrict the use of weapons of war by such companies, a review of legislation on the use and possession of firearms, including hunting and recreational arms, the enactment of legislation on the registration and marking of weapons and the implementation of changes in functional regulation of arms and national police depositories and stockpiles. However, that success would not have been possible without the cooperation of civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGO) such as the Council of Christian Churches of Angola and the action of some NGOs such as the Halo Trust, which is dedicated to the destruction of obsolete weapons and to mine-clearance. In addition to those activities, there has been increased involvement, especially by young people, in conferences, debates and other forums with the goal of adopting and disseminating international laws in conformity with the United Nations Programme of Action.

With regard to international cooperation, Angola is a member of two subregional organizations, namely, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Southern African Development Community, both of which have programmes to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our attachment to international instruments on arms control. We stand ready to continue to work with you, Madam President, and the other members of the Council in order to reach agreement on a draft resolution that takes into account the burning problem of the proliferation of small arms to non-State actors, which have been at the centre of many conflicts in the world, some of which are on the agenda of the Council.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein and the President of the Côte d'Ivoire chapter of the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms, Mr. Karamoko Diakité, for their briefings. We also appreciate the initiative of the Lithuanian presidency in organizing this debate and in preparing the concept note (S/2015/306).

Chile promotes disarmament in all its forms and calls for an effective fight against the illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition while framing such efforts against the backdrop of a view on the human perspective that is comprehensive and manifold and considers the well-being of people to be the ultimate goal of such efforts.

We support the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We urge Member States to advance its implementation by adopting legally binding instruments on marking, tracing and illicit brokering. The Arms Trade Treaty deserves special mention. Chile has signed the Treaty and will soon to ratify it.

Our main concern is the impact of these weapons on civilians in conflict zones. We must not forget that in conflict situations the majority of deaths are the result of the use of small arms and light weapons. In turn, such weapons constitute a serious threat to peace and stability in pre- and post-conflict societies. Moreover, such weapons facilitate a broad range of human rights violations, including murder, mutilation, rape and other forms of sexual violence, enforced disappearance, torture and forced recruitment of children by armed groups. More violations and abuses of human rights are committed with small arms and light weapons than with any other weapon. The uncontrolled accumulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition have severe implications for human development, peace and sustainable economic growth. Armed violence erodes the social fabric, gives rise to legal uncertainty, increases crime, produces political instability and creates a climate of impunity.

This issue cuts across all issues on the agenda of the Council. Therefore, the diversion of weapons to non-State actors or unauthorized users — which are often linked to terrorist groups and their support networks and recruit and use children — the illegal exploitation of natural resources, transnational organized crime and drug trafficking, among other things, negatively impact civilian populations in all regions. We therefore believe it to be a priority to strengthen existing mechanisms to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. Traceability is part of the whole system of exchange of goods worldwide, and these weapons cannot be excluded from registration mechanisms. In that context, we call upon States to fulfil their responsibilities to protect their populations against the devastating effects of the illicit trade in small arms. We also emphasize the role of the international community in that effort. We believe that the work of the Security Council could be enhanced by a frequent dialogue on the impact of the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons on international security, based on the 2014 Arms Trade Treaty.

The draft resolution being developed by the Lithuanian presidency sets out clear progress since the Council's previous resolution on the matter, namely, resolution 2117 (2003). Nonetheless, we believe that it is important to recognize the impact of the illicit transfer of small arms and ammunition to non-State actors and unauthorized groups, an issue that must be addressed given the harmful effects it can have through the actions of non-State actors, which now cross international borders and have a major impact on the civilian populations of the affected regions and on international peace and security.

In conclusion, we believe that the Council cannot remain oblivious to the serious consequences that illicit trafficking and unregulated trade in small arms and light weapons have for civilian populations, including children and women. While we commend the convening of this meeting, therefore, we believe it is vital that the Council continue to follow the issue very closely.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Lithuania.

Let me start by thanking the Secretary-General for his briefing and for his report on small arms and light weapons (S/2015/289) underpinning today's discussion. I would also like to thank the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights for highlighting the very important human dimension of the issue at hand, and Mr. Karamoko Diakité for his personal testimony, which provided an eye-opening perspective on the real-life impact of small arms and light weapons.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later today by the observer of the European Union.

The subject of small arms and light weapons does not often appear on the Security Council's agenda, and yet it is a matter of life and death every single day for hundreds of thousands of people in conflict-affected zones, with civilians and in particular women, children, refugees and the displaced facing increased risks caused by the much too easy availability of such arms. Deplorably, more than half a million people, including 60,000 women and girls, die every year as a result of the violence caused by small arms. Even very basic daily tasks, such as fetching water from a remote well, gathering wood for cooking and foraging for food in war-ravaged areas, are fraught with increased risks of being attacked, terrorized, robbed of meagre belongings or raped at gunpoint. Children even as young as pre-teens are recruited by force to become soldiers and made to kill and maim with small arms in order not to be killed themselves.

The World Bank estimates that more than 900 million small arms and light weapons are in circulation globally, while the quantities of weapons amassed by terrorists, armed groups and criminal networks are almost impossible to assess. It is undeniable that terrorists, other armed groups and criminal networks have accumulated vast arsenals of both light and heavy weapons by seizing them from Government forces, diverting them from legal trade and smuggling or tapping into civilian-owned stocks. Illegal arms trading and smuggling support criminal networks and finance terrorist activities, spreading death, chaos and forced displacement as terrorist groups expand their sway. The international community must fundamentally and urgently address this threat, since every day we spend arguing about concepts takes a very real toll in human lives.

Since the last Council debate on small arms (see S/PV.7036), we have seen some major advances made in systematically addressing the illicit trade in small arms. In December 2014, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) entered into force. To date, that landmark Treaty has been signed by 130 Member States and ratified by 67. We encourage all remaining States to accede to the Treaty without delay and proceed with its ratification as quickly as possible. Its scope includes small arms and light weapons, and it will become an important tool for countering the illicit trade in small arms and increasing the transparency of their transfers. Most importantly, it will help prevent arms falling into the hands of human rights abusers and those who violate the rules of war. It is vital that the international community, including the Security Council, contribute to its effective implementation.

In 2013, the Council adopted the landmark resolution 2117 (2013), establishing a framework for United Nations action on small arms-related issues. But as new challenges emerge and conflicts proliferate, we believe that it is urgent for this framework to be put into practice through concrete measures that can translate the Council's efforts to tackle the devastating effects of the illicit arms trade into more concrete action. Let me focus on what we would like to see done.

First and foremost, the United Nations should never lose sight of the fact that the fundamental aim of its actions is the protection of human beings — human lives. Behind every disarmament, demobilization and reconciliation (DDR) programme there is a former combatant with a gun who is out of work and has a family to feed. Behind every security sector reform programme there are civilians who have lost faith and trust in the police and the army, because they are often the same men who were just recently killing, raping and torturing. Behind every direct victim of small arms there are more who suffer the indirect consequences, whether they are widows raising their families alone or orphaned children roaming the streets, an easy prey for child recruiters and human traffickers.

Secondly, all the numerous tools at the disposal of the United Nations — peacekeeping operations, special political missions, country teams and sanctions committees — should be further encouraged to work as one in fighting the illicit arms trade. Peacekeeping operations should share information with sanctions panels and help to implement arms embargoes. All traditional arms control measures, such as DDR and security sector reform, should be part of integrated strategies encompassing interventions aimed at strengthening community security, managing conflict and mitigating armed violence. No DDR effort or peace and reconciliation process can be expected to succeed when porous borders provide an endless supply of new weapons.

Thirdly, the Council should be more open, particularly with regard to arms embargo implementation, to involving neighbouring States and regional actors and using open briefings to keep the wider United Nations membership regularly informed about the work of the Sanctions Committees.

Finally, the Council should contribute to the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty. United Nations assistance to Member States in developing transfer control systems and physical security and stockpile management and preventing diversion will be reinforced by universalization and robust implementation of the Treaty. Furthermore, the ATT reporting mechanism will result in the increased transparency of small arms transfers and will become a valuable source of information for United Nations activities.

In that context, Lithuania has proposed the adoption of a new Security Council resolution that would focus on practical steps for preventing the illicit transfer of small arms. The draft text contains significant additions to resolution 2117 (2013), making it more action-oriented, operational and systematic in tackling the issue of small arms and light weapons and the risks and threats they pose to those in conflict-affected zones. Over the past week, we have held a series of intense consultations and bilateral discussions with the fundamental goal in mind of alleviating the damage, harm, suffering and loss that small arms cause to civilian populations affected by armed conflicts, and the devastation and barbarity of armed, criminal and terrorist groups.

We believe that a consensus on quite a number of important new elements has emerged as a result of our work together. We urge delegations to build on those elements of convergence and to continue their exchanges in good faith and flexibility, but also with a due sense of urgency, so that we can quickly conclude negotiations on that important document. What I ask is that we not throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water. We can make a difference in the lives of those women, girls, boys, elderly and displaced people who often have no recourse or defences other than the resolve and determination of the international community to act on their behalf. We should and we must.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I would like to remind speakers that they should limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. As usual, delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the full texts in writing and to deliver condensed versions in the Chamber. I appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that proper interpretation can be provided. And I would like to inform all concerned that we will be carrying on this open debate right through the lunch hour, as we have a significant number of speakers.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Minister for Direction of Arms Control of the Ministry of Interior and Police of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Rosa Chupany (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, on behalf of the Government of the Dominican Republic, I thank the United Nations for permitting us to take part in this open debate. I congratulate Lithuania on its outstanding work in presiding over the Security Council for the month of May and commend the excellent subject chosen for this high-level meeting. We would also like to salute the representatives of those countries present for this timely opportunity to reiterate our full support for the work, results and actions achieved thanks to this agenda.

In order not to exceed my allotted time, I shall abridge my statement and focus on a number of aspects that are important to the Dominican Republic. An extensive and detailed version of this statement will be circulated to each Permanent Mission in the course of the day.

The stockpiling and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons are a scourge that affects and has repercussions around the world. It is indisputable that the excessive, brutal and uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses a serious threat to international peace and security, human rights and the social development of our countries. It affects the most vulnerable and sensitive groups in our civilian populations and has a devastating impact on human, economic and social development. The spread of these destabilizing weapons endangers the most highly vulnerable groups in our societies, affecting tranquillity, harmony, peace and peaceful coexistence. It also interferes in the initiatives of the Dominican Government to promote poverty eradication and sustainable development.

In order to provide a picture of the scale of the problem of small arms and light weapons in the Dominican Republic, I should like to offer the following statistics, whose numbers speak for themselves. In 2012, our country had a population of 9,680,000 inhabitants and a crime rate of 23.4 per cent per 100,000 inhabitants. In 2013, with a population increase of 103,717 inhabitants, the crime rate dropped to 20.3 per cent, or a decrease of 12 per cent, with some 1,257 deaths by firearms. However, in 2014, with a population increase of 98,806 inhabitants the crime rate dropped to 18.3 per cent, or a decrease of 9 per cent, with the number of deaths by firearms dropping to 1,132, which is 125 fewer deaths compared to 2013 for a decrease of 10 per cent. These figures give an idea of the efforts made by our authorities to fight crime and control the use of firearms by civilians; these efforts have paid off.

In the Dominican Republic, we are working strenuously to control the acquisition of illegal weapons, and we are implementing actions to effectively regulate their trade and combat their illicit trafficking. In the framework of these efforts, we underscore the most important aspects. As background, I note that the Dominican Republic does not manufacture firearms, components or ammunition, and a ban on their importation has been in place since 2006. We are currently modernizing the law on the bearing and ownership of firearms to meet international standards. In 2012, at the initiative of our President, we established a national weapons system, which is an advanced technological platform that includes a ballistic and biometrics laboratory. Since it was put it place, we have captured 77,774 traces of ballistic and biometric data, and we continue to make progress in that direction.

We have also undertaken the marking of weapons and ammunition as another effective method of control. Since the end of 2013, some 9,968 weapons have been marked within the framework of a programme called Promoting Firearms Marking in Latin America and the Caribbean, in cooperation with the secretariat of the Organization of American States. Joint operations have been fruitful. In 2013, the authorities confiscated some 5,732 weapons. We are also constantly decommissioning and destroying weapons. With the support of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, we have destroyed some 8,000 firearms since 2012.

My country signed the Arms Trade Treaty on 3 June 2013 and ratified it on 5 June 2014, completing the process within approximately a year and eight months, which is proof of our commitment to fulfilling the goals of the Treaty.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Dominican Government, I would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to participate in today's important debate and, as I said earlier in this statement, I reiterate the Dominican Republic's commitment to supporting all initiatives that are launched in this area.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the African Union.

Mr. António: First of all, I would like to thank the delegation of Lithuania for organizing today's open debate and for giving us the opportunity to present the African Union's perspectives on the very important question of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights for their comprehensive briefings. I thank my brother, Mr. Karamoko Diakité, for the very profound and moving testimony he offered on behalf of victims.

One of the major threats to peace and security in Africa is the presence and continued proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). According to 2004 statistics, out of the approximately 500 million illicit small arms and light weapons in circulation worldwide at that time, more than 100 million were in Africa. In the light of arms flows within and from outside the continent, irresponsible trade and diversion, porous borders between countries and the absence of effective measures to control illicit proliferation, this number is growing.

Although they do not in themselves trigger conflicts or cause the criminal or terrorist activities in which they are used, the widescale availability, accumulation and illicit flows of such weapons contribute to the escalation of conflicts and serious human rights violations, undermine peace agreements, put peacekeepers and humanitarian workers at risk and impede economic development, social stability, democracy and good governance in post-conflict settings. Furthermore, the destructive continued existence of many non-State actors, including insurgents, armed gang members, pirates and terrorists, has been strengthened by the easy availability of these weapons. We therefore support the position expressed on this specific issue by the Permanent Representatives of the three African non-permanent members of the Security Council — Angola, Chad and Nigeria — and we hope that the draft resolution under consideration by the Council will adequately address the important issue of non-State actors, especially since United Nations reports have consistently corroborated this fact.

As already note by Mr. Diakité, it is indeed well known that countless arms have flowed from Libya into other North and West African countries as well as the Middle East, fuelling conflicts, terrorism and crime, and causing further instability. It has also been reported that illegal small arms and light weapons from Yemen have been flowing into Somalia, where they are now boosting the terrorist activities of Al-Shabaab. It should also be noted that, at the heart of the Arms Trade Treaty, adopted after years of negotiations and hard work by all Member States, lies the true desire of all States to prevent the irresponsible trade in arms and their diversion into the illicit sphere. The African Union Common Position on an Arms Trade Treaty, adopted by the Assembly of the African Union prior to the March 2013 United Nations Conference, called for a treaty that explicitly prohibits the transfer of conventional weapons to non-State actors. The principled position of the African Union on this matter is therefore undisputable and unwavering.

In the face of these challenges, the African Union continues to press forward in its efforts aimed at addressing the scourge of illicit small arms and light weapons on the continent. In addition to its long-standing support for the different instruments adopted within the United Nations framework, the African Union has made significant progress over recent years in establishing the mechanisms needed to control the circulation, transfer and use of small arms and light weapons in Africa. In that regard, the African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, also known as the Bamako Declaration, which was adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity in December 2000, remains the main policy document. In the Declaration, member States undertook to identify, seize and destroy illicit weapons. By so doing, the African Union succeeded in bringing together the different regions to build synergies and collaborate to address the issue through the establishment, in 2008, of the AU-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Lights Weapons.

Charged with the task of coordinating the implementation of continent-wide agreements related to small arms and light weapons, as well as with promoting the exchange of experiences and research and data collection, the Steering Committee developed the African Union Strategy on the Control of Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, which was adopted by member State experts in September 2011.

Furthermore, with the support of the European Union, the AU embarked in 2010 on a three-year project on the fight against illicit firearms in Africa, managed by the Regional Centre on Small Arms. That project was renewed for a further three years in July 2013, thanks to the substantial support of the European Union.

Currently, the African Union is working with the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, within the framework of it Group of Seven presidency, on developing and launching a project focused on enhancing physical security and stockpile management in the Sahel region. Physical security and stockpile management is an area in which substantial work needs to be done and in which immediate gains can be made to prevent the diversion to the illicit market of arms procured for legitimate security needs.

Before concluding, allow me to stress that, for the African Union, the problem of the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons requires the commitment of all States in order to achieve a holistic and integrated solution through improved cooperation and coordination, as well as by reinforcing capacities to regulate compliance with all aspects, as provided for in existing international and regional instruments.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Mr. Carrera Castro (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Lithuania on assuming the presidency of the Security Council, for convening this open debate and for the important role that country is playing in the Council through you, Madam Ambassador. I would also like to thank you for the illuminating concept note (S/2015/306, annex) that is guiding today's deliberations. In addition, I wish to express our recognition to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein and to Mr. Karamoko Diakité for their informative briefings, including in particular the moving and clear statement Mr. Diakité made this afternoon. Similarly, we thank the Secretary-General for the valuable recommendations he presented in his biennial report (S/2015/289).

Slightly less than two years ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 2117 (2013), the first of its kind, which sought to address the devastating impact of small arms and light weapons, with a focus on the repercussions of illicit transfers, destabilizing accumulation and the improper use of small arms and light weapons on international peace and security. The resolution was an important step towards harnessing international cooperation in arms control, including through its provisions on improving the use of arms embargoes and its recognition of the importance of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), with the aim of reducing human suffering. The Security Council, more than any other international forum, has witnessed the high cost in human life caused by the absence of a legally binding instrument in that regard, which strengthens the case for ensuring the Treaty's full implementation and universality.

The scourge of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has grave consequences that impact international peace and security, in particular with respect to the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. The illicit arms trade fuels armed violence and insecurity and exacerbates criminality and gender-based violence. The civilian population, especially women and children, most often suffers the consequences. Despite the peacekeeping efforts of the United Nations and existing mechanisms to help States comply with arms embargoes, the unregulated circulation of small arms continues its alarming proliferation. That situation is able to persist due to the lucrative illegal market, inadequate regulation and the lack of controls, including poor or minimal supervision of stockpiles.

Addressing that complex phenomenon requires a focus supported by integrated policies that highlight the role of international, regional and subregional organizations. Moreover, within the United Nations, even though the theme of small arms and light weapons is amply addressed by the General Assembly, whose leadership on the issue deserves recognition, the Security Council too, inasmuch as this is a transectoral phenomenon that impacts international peace and security, should play an active and complementary role in its areas of specific competence. For that reason, we support the draft resolution on the matter, which is based on resolution 2117 (2013) and which we hope will be adopted soon. We would especially like to stress the responsibility of States to protect their civilian populations, and to emphasize that preventing the proliferation of small arms should be part of that commitment.

It is not enough to control the flow of arms. In that regard, we welcome the specific focus on the flow of illegal munitions in the Secretary-General's report. We agree with his recommendation to explore new ways to combat the flow of illicit munitions, especially within the context of arms embargoes. That could have an immediate effect on armed violence; indeed, the report recognizes that the true value of small arms "depends on the uninterrupted supply of munitions". While it is true that the Arms Trade Treaty addresses munitions and their parts and components, the latter are not subject to the same degree of control as weapons and are excluded from the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as its follow-up mechanisms. As the Secretary-General's report recognizes, given that the searchability of consumer products has evolved in other areas, whether or not munitions are included in weapons regulations appears to be more a matter of political will than to reflect a technical or logistical problem that would prevent it. Munitions are the essence of what makes firearms lethal; their exclusion leaves our attention to illicit traffic incomplete.

Moreover, the Secretary-General's report also refers to the fact that, in post-conflict periods, criminal violence often replaces political violence, which has long-term implications for those States. While responsibility for establishing effective norms and controls over firearms redounds to those sovereign States, it is important to bear in mind that the challenges facing States emerging from conflict generally reveal serious institutional defects that make them particularly vulnerable to arms trafficking, which is often linked, in the case of Latin America and other countries in Africa and Asia, to drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation on the importance of ensuring that measures to collect weapons and related activities should go hand in hand with development programmes aimed at preventing and reducing armed violence. Concerning the role of the arms industry, we wish to reiterate that, while it may prove useful to consider new technologies to improve stockpile management and reduce the diversion of arms to illicit markets, it would not be remiss to encourage producer States to promote responsibility and the full implementation of the relevant laws and norms. Our common goal should be to put a halt to the overproduction of all weapons.

Firearms claim the lives of hundreds of thousands of people each year, not to mention the related and indirect damage. Given the high toll, we all must support and improve the existing regulatory framework to ensure maximum effectiveness of the Council's response to threats to international peace and security caused by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. To prevent illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, we must strengthen our efforts and create synergies among the various instruments in order have coordinated mechanisms that reinforce our efforts.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellencey Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Mayr-Harting: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia Herzegovia; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We wish to thank you, Madam President, for convening this important open debate, for continuing Australia's pioneering work on small arms and light weapons in the Security Council in 2013 and for your excellent concept note (S/2015/306, annex). We also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive biennial report to the Security Council on small arms and light weapons (S/2015/289), and in particular for the 14 pertinent recommendations for consideration by the Council.

We very much welcomed the adoption of resolution 2117 (2013). Small arms and light weapons are still the most frequently used weapons in the majority of recent armed conflicts. The consequences of the illicit spread, widespread availability and trafficking in these arms and ammunition remain a highly disturbing and lasting problem, and thus a major challenge for the international community. The many times the Security Council has expressed its concerns over the threat to peace and security arising from the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons since 2013 illustrate the scope of this challenge. It also reflects the conviction that a specific focus on adequate control of small arms and light weapons is required if we want to effectively tackle conflict and post-conflict settings. We therefore strongly support the Secretary-General's recommendation that the wide-ranging impact of the illicit circulation and the misuse of these weapons needs to be consistently addressed by the Security Council when considering geographic and thematic issues on its agenda. The wide range of the humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences of illicit Small arms and light weapons and the serious threat that they pose to peace, safety, security, stability and sustainable development at the individual, local, national, regional and international levels require a comprehensive and multidimensional approach.

Resolution 2117 (2013) represented a major step forward in international cooperation on the control of these weapons by bringing together a wide range of tools and actions for the Security Council, Member States, United Nations entities and intergovernmental, regional and subregional organizations to use in order to prevent and combat the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of these weapons.

The European Union strategy to combat the illicit accumulation and trafficking of these weapons and their ammunition seeks to ensure that the EU's security policy and its development policy are consistent, and to fully exploit the means available to it at multilateral and regional levels to develop a comprehensive and coherent approach that harnesses all forms of leverage at our disposal. It is based on the recognition that human security and human development are interdependent and cover preventive and reactive measures.

Many issues are of key concern to us — many have been singled out by Lithuania's concept note and the Secretary-General's report. I would just like to mention a few of them.

Among other things, we will continue to call for the inclusion of ammunition as part of a comprehensive approach to the control of small arms and light weapons. Small arms and light weapons can be operated and misused only if ammunition is available. Effective controls therefore also need to include significant efforts to regulate and control ammunition. The relevant provisions of the United Nations Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trade in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition and the Arms Trade Treaty are steps in the right direction, but further measures are required by the international community to deal with the issue of ammunition.

In order to effectively combat diversion and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, marking, tracing and systematic and appropriate record-keeping are essential. Weapons need to be marked upon production; import and existing stocks should also be marked. The secure and effective management of stockpiles is also central to curb the illicit spread of these weapons, including the destruction of surplus. The European Union regularly offers assistance to improve the physical security and stockpile management of these weapons. Limited such infrastructure leaves countries especially vulnerable to the diversion of these weapons when these are stored in small armouries in remote locations, including in volatile border regions, and during transfer. New mobile and flexible technologies may offer solutions to effectively secure these weapons in instances when the risk of diversion is at the highest. The European Union will support such initiatives on the use of such new technologies in order to concretely demonstrate their potential.

It may remain essential to fully integrate the gender perspective into all efforts at preventing and combating the risk of the misuse, diversion and illicit circulation of these weapons, so that the gender aspects of armed violence are adequately addressed. They also require the full and active participation of men and women.

We firmly believe that the Arms Trade Treaty, when effectively and widely implemented, will make a major contribution to more responsible and more transparent international arms transfers. We therefore warmly welcome the signatures and ratifications deposited from all regions so far and call on all States that have not yet done so to become signatories and State parties to the Treaty. All member States of the European Union are signatories of the Treaty, and so far 26 of the 28 member States have ratified it. The remaining ratifications are expected shortly. The European Union assists a number of third countries in strengthening their arms-transfer controls system in line with the requirements of the Treaty. The European Union also remains committed to providing, upon request, further assistance to countries that have identified their needs in their national systems in keeping with the obligations of the Arms Trade Treaty.

We support the view that it is necessary to integrate small arms and light-weapons-related issues into the planning and when drafting or updating the mandates of United Nations operations. The European Union Foreign Affairs Council has also underlined the importance of including these issues in the planning of future EU civilian and military Common Security and Defence Policy missions.

The diversion of small arms and light weapons remains a tremendous problem in many parts of the world. Poor weapon-security and management, leading to leakages of such weapons to the illicit market, is another area of great concern to us. In that context, we believe that the international community still lacks vital monitoring and diagnostic capacity, so that, in many cases, we do not have sufficient information to formulate effective policies against the diversion, illicit spread and trafficking in small arms and light weapons. To provide such information, the European Union is funding the iTRACE project, which is providing verified, on-the-ground data on illicit trade routes of diverted and trafficked conventional weapons and their ammunition. The project combines an extensive programme of field investigations in today's armed conflicts, especially in Africa and the Middle East, and documents identified illicit weapons in sight site with a global, public access weapon-tracking database on individual and diverted or trafficked weapons. It seeks to provide new insights into the diversion patterns. It is thus also very relevant for the work of the Security Council sanctions groups and a number of United Nations missions, and can make a contribution to making the implementation of arms embargoes more effective. The iTRACE project also specifically aims to support the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty by assisting national export-control authorities in detecting relevant diversion activities.

We also wish to echo the Secretary-General's call that States should make full use of INTERPOL's Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System (iARMS), which provides a common global platform for facilitating information exchange and investigative cooperation. It is an integral part of the international strategy and operational framework to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and is funded by the European Union. We welcome the fact that iARMS is being used by law enforcement agencies in more and more States, and that it has already recorded its first operational success.

In conclusion, we are confident that the Security Council will continue to pay special attention to small arms and light weapons issues in its agenda, and call on all States to do their utmost to contribute to the fight against this scourge. We will continue to play our part in this common endeavour.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Ruiz Blanco (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate on the human cost of the illicit transfer, destablilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. The issue is of the utmost importance in the current context and underscores how the challenges to peace and security of nations are closely linked to illicit arms trafficking. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the representative of the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms for their briefings and reports.

For many years, Colombia has suffered the terrible impact that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has not only on the life and security of individuals but on a country's stability and development prospects. Colombia is aware that illicit arms trafficking is a phenomenon that does not respect borders and that is related to the world drug problem, transnational organized crime, terrorism and violations of human rights. Accordingly, the phenomenon should be approached from a broad, multilateral and holistic perspective. That is why Colombia has actively participated in all efforts to ensure that this issue is addressed in multilateral forums. For example, in the late 1980s we began to request, initially with a small group of countries, that the issue of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons be included on the agenda of the General Assembly. The most important development of that process was the approval of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in July 2001. The Programme of Action includes a vigorous process of review that has made it possible to periodically evaluate and review its implementation and propose the measures necessary to ensure its continued relevance.

At the level of our hemisphere, we participated in the negotiation of the Inter-American Convention against the Manufacturing of and Illicit Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, adopted in December 1997, and, until recently, the only binding instrument on this issue.

Colombia also raised the issue of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in the Security Council. During our presidency in August 2001, an open debate (see S/PV.4362) was held during which a presidential statement (S/PRST/2001/21) was approved. I would like to highlight several elements of that statement.

First, the destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons, in addition to increasing the intensity and duration of armed conflicts and thwarting efforts to prevent armed conflict, poses a major obstacle to the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Secondly, there is a need for effective national regulations and controls concerning small arms and light weapons, that is, arms-exporting countries should exercise the highest degree of responsibility with regard to transactions involving small arms and light weapons. All countries have the responsibility to prevent the illegal diversion and re-export of such weapons so that the spread of legal weapons to illegal markets is contained.

Thirdly, the Council welcomed the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

By the same token, Colombia participated in the most recent developments in this field — the Arms Trade Treaty — and argued that small arms and light weapons should be included in the Treaty and that measures to prevent their diversion be defined. On 24 September 2013, the President of the Republic signed the Arms Trade Treaty, having determined that the Treaty is a useful and necessary tool to prevent crimes such as the diversion and illicit trade in arms by such unauthorized persons as terrorist groups, criminal gangs and criminal organizations. At this time, my country is in the process of ratifying the Treaty.

Also at the domestic level, my country, which acknowledges the nefarious consequences of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the destabilizing impact of their use by unauthorized actors, included in its Constitution article 223, which states

> "only the Government can introduce and manufacture weapons, munitions and explosives. No person shall possess or carry them without permission from the competent authority."

Since 2002, together with South Africa and Japan, we have presented every year a draft resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, which underscores, in addition to other elements, the need for States to intensify their cooperation, build national capacities related to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and which urges all countries to fully implement the Programme of Action.

In conclusion, allow me to mention that, while the international community has over the past few decades developed the instruments necessary to effectively combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the economic benefits that derive from that trade and the lack of political will to implement those instruments have allowed the trade to remain a problem of alarming magnitude, as many of the previous speakers have noted. That is why we believe it is time to act with a greater sense of humanity and to truly commit to fulfilling our obligations, legal, political and moral, and to move towards a world in which arms are only used by the proper authorities to guarantee peace, security and the safety of their citizens.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Alhakim (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend my congratulations to you, Madam President, for assuming the presidency of the Council for this month, the professional manner with which you are steering the Council's deliberations, and your initiative to devote this meeting to the human cost of the illicit transfer, destablilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. I would also like to extend our thanks to Jordan for its wise leadership of the Council last month. We also wish to extend our thanks to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, as well as to Mr. Diakité for their briefings to the Council.

The trafficking, proliferation and trade in small arms and light weapons constitutes one of the alarming situations that face societies and the international community. Looking at the adverse consequences of that phenomenon, which affects the security and economies of States, victims of such weapons are primarily civilians, the elderly, women and children. That reality has no doubt led to the submission of international resolutions, conventions and initiatives to grapple with the illicit trade in all such weapons in all their aspects.

In the current global environment, the international community is at a decisive and delicate crossroads given the crimes perpetrated by terrorist groups and organized crime networks, and the exacerbation of internal and regional crises. That makes it necessary for us to cooperate, redouble our efforts and demonstrate sincere political will to curb the indiscriminate proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and to prevent the illicit trade in those weapons, which are no different from the weapons of mass destruction in their disastrous consequences.

Iraq realizes the need for continuous and serious work to counter both the phenomenon of the illicit trade in SALW, as well as their adverse effect in many areas and regions of the world, especially in the Middle East. This threatens to undermine international peace and security, victimizes people and destabilizes societies. Iraq welcomed the relevant international conventions that introduced monitoring measures to combat the proliferation of these weapons. We accord special attention to these weapons, for we suffer from their use in the hands of the terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and other such groups that acquire these weapons and use them to attack civilian and military sites indiscriminately, destroy infrastructure and educational services and burn libraries and cultural heritage sites, thereby annihilating the civilization of Mesopotamia.

In the light of this, the Security Council adopted a number of resolutions to prevent that entity from continuing its crimes. I would like to take this opportunity to call upon the Council to urge all States to abide by their provisions by stopping the recruitment and transit of terrorists, as well as ceasing to arm and smuggle all these terrorist groups. Since 2013, when the Security Council, in the course of an open meeting (see S/PV.7036) at the margins of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, tackled that matter and adopted resolution 2117 (2013), the Government of Iraq has adopted legislative and practical measures at different levels to curb this grave phenomenon. This has included acceding, on 23 May 2013, to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, which supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, to which Iraq acceded on 17 May 2008. We have also drafted national legislation to curb the adverse effect of these weapons, including gun silencers. We have set up oversight mechanisms, modernized detection and monitoring tools and improved storage facilities. We are also finalizing our end-user certificate and are disseminating it in accordance with United Nations resolutions and the United Nations Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

We urge international partners to make further efforts to build the capacities of developing countries at their request. In that regard, we look forward to the efforts of the pertinent organs of the United Nations. We emphasize their important role in improving the harmonization of States' needs in line with their relevant mandates.

We realize that raising cultural awareness among citizens is very important in eliminating the adverse effects of SALW. Our relevant institutions are providing the necessary guidelines and information to help alleviate the suffering caused by the use of these weapons. They are also emphasizing the need for exercising strong control over the SALW trade and its production, as well as reporting to the authorities any violations or detections of illicit military stockpiles.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize our support for the efforts of the United Nations and all international organizations concerned, in addition to our support to international and regional initiatives aimed at curbing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, their misuse and illegal transfer.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Romania.

Mrs. Miculescu (Romania): Let me join my colleagues in thanking Lithuania for organizing this timely debate and to congratulate you for the excellent stewardship of this meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General for his biennial report on small arms and light weapons (SALW) (S/2015/209) and for the recommendations contained therein.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the elements set out in the new draft resolution. We look forward to its adoption by the Council, thus building on the provisions on resolution 2117 (2013) with a view to assisting the countries affected by the illicit trade in SALW.

While Romania fully aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union, I would like to briefly underline a couple of points of national relevance.

The international community must continue to mobilize and fight against the scourge of illicit SALW. At the same time, we must also state that international efforts to regular the trade in small arms and light weapons are not aimed at constraining the rights of States to defend themselves and to use small arms and light weapons for legitimate purposes in a responsible manner.

As Council members know, Romania is one of the 64 States to have ratified the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), and we are firmly engaged in the ongoing process aimed at ensuring its effective implementation and universalization. My country strongly believes that arms export control regimes are essential tools for the maintenance of international and regional peace and stability, as well as for enabling sustainable development. Greater responsibility in transfers of SALW is needed to ensure the effective prevention of the destabilizing accumulation and misuse of such weapons.

The Romanian policy on SALW is fully in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions and presidential statements on the issue and the goals envisaged in the Arms Trade Treaty, the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the International Instrument on Marking and Tracing, the United Nations Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, as well as with the relevant initiatives of the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Wassenaar Arrangement.

In our view, internationally agreed regulations, as well as regional agreements, should be implemented and enforced at the national level in a timely and comprehensive manner, in particular because these instruments often facilitate the strengthening of cooperation. In that regard and based on our experience, the International Tracing Instrument has proved to be a very useful and functional mechanism for exchanging information between countries on tracing SALW in a suitable and reliable manner.

Transparency in armaments is, in our view, a substantial confidence-building measure that could also help assess if an excessive or destabilizing accumulation of arms is taking place. For Romania, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is a very important practical tool, and we believe that such tools could also be used for the effective implementation of the ATT.

Aiming at the full and effective implementation of arms embargoes established through Council resolutions, our national export control agency has set up a speedy mechanism for the enforcement of such provisions. Our domestic law stipulates the direct applicability of measures related to arms embargoes. I assure the Council that efforts to continuously improve inter-agency collaboration in order to adequately implement such measures at the national level are not spared.

More effective cooperation and cohesion should also be pursued at the regional and international levels, including within the United Nations system. For example, national procedures have been developed in order to warrant efficient cooperation with regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), including through facilitating coordination on specific documentation for export controls. The ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Material should be considered a successful endeavour that addresses the illicit transfers of SALW and their destabilizing accumulation and misuse. That approach, we think, could be implemented in other regions or subregions as well.

We acknowledge the significant efforts and the role played by the United Nations agencies, as well as by civil society organizations, in dealing with all aspects related to preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in SALW. I would like therefore to recognize today some of those actors, such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the International Action Network on Small Arms, Saferworld, International Alert, Control Arms, Small Arms Survey and others. They make a critical contribution to promoting public understanding, public awareness and public support for effective arms control policies.

Finally, I would like to underscore our call for the further strengthening of international cooperation in this field. It is the only way to develop an integrated international approach to combat illicit transfers of SALW. Cooperation is paramount to improving and consolidating the international community's reaction against the illicit proliferation of SALW, especially considering that the heavy cost of conflicts enabled by irresponsible transfers of SALW is being increasingly paid by innocent civilians, mostly women and children.

As Bertrand Russell said, "The only thing that will redeem mankind is cooperation". That is even true so when working to ensure a safer world for future generations, as we all try to do so here under this beautiful roof.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): I thank the Lithuanian presidency of the Security Council for convening this debate in an open format. Let me also thank the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the President of the Côte d'Ivoire chapter of the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms for their briefings.

Brazil supports United Nations activities to combat the risks associated with the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons and shares the concern over the suffering and high number of casualties related to those arms. In conflict and post-conflict situations, small arms enhance insecurity and feed instability. The illicit transfer, ready availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons continue to pose a threat to international peace and security in many parts of the world. In discussing the issue in the Council, however, we should be mindful that there are no international parameters to determine what constitutes destabilizing accumulation. Brazil is of the view that States have a legitimate right to self-defence, as provided for by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, and to produce, export, import and transfer small arms and light weapons, while seeking to reduce overall military spending and striving to prevent the illegal diversion and re-export of small arms.

We should also clearly differentiate between the problem of small arms and light weapons in conflict and in non-conflict situations as a determinant of whether a certain case falls within the purview of the Security Council. We should not mix the concepts of conflict and violence or blur the distinction between threats to international peace and security and public security issues. In the same vein, it is relevant not to associate the negative impacts of small arms and light weapons with poor or unstable regions of the world, as they affect people throughout the world, in developing and developed countries alike.

Questions related to the use of small arms and light weapons, when not related to a specific conflict situation, should be discussed in the General Assembly and within the framework of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Challenges posed by small arms and light weapons should be dealt with by taking into account the specific nature of each situation. The Council should first and foremost emphasize greater coordination among existing initiatives on the ground and strengthen the capacity of national authorities to better fulfil their responsibilities.

Practical measures to promote confidence in the field of conventional weapons, such as the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures, play an important role in contributing to the promotion of understanding, transparency and cooperation among States and increased stability and security. Also noteworthy is the recent entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) on 24 December 2014, as highlighted by many previous speakers.

The ATT fosters the basic principle that enacting, enforcing and strengthening export control systems of conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, parts and components, are a shared responsibility of all States. We regret only that the negotiations on the ATT could not result in a clear prohibition on arms exports and transfers to any non-State actor not authorized by the importing State — a provision that would certainly contribute to promoting the Council's goals. While we hope that this gap can be duly addressed in the future, we encourage those States that have yet not done so, in particular major producers and exporters, to sign the Arms Trade Treaty, which is in the process of ratification by my country, Brazil.

The importance of cooperation at the regional and international levels in preventing, combatting and eliminating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition cannot be overstated. At the regional level, particularly within the framework of the Union of South American Nations, Brazil and its neighbours are progressively building confidence and enhancing transparency in defence policies, including information on military expenditures and conventional arms. At the subregional level, a working group of the Southern Common Market and associated States has, since 2001, been promoting greater harmonization of national legislation and the exchange of States' experiences and information on combatting the illicit trafficking of firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related material. In addition, in September 2014 the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States held in San Salvador the first meeting of the working group on illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons.

Having chaired the Peacebuilding Commission last year, Brazil is fully aware of the dangers that insufficient small arms controls pose to States in situations of fragility due to conflict and instability. The uncontrolled spread of small arms increases the risk of relapse into armed conflict and may hamper development efforts, undermining prospects for sustainable peace. The Council is right in placing a high degree of importance on the processes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform. It is equally important that the Council take a strong stance against the continued channelling of weapons to zones of conflict, including those affected by intense non-State activities. Nowhere are the tragic effects of the flow of small arms and light weapons more evident today than in Syria. Brazil renews its call for the immediate halt in arms provision to all parties in Syria.

While recognizing the immense toll that the uncontrolled spread of small arms has exacted on peace and security, Brazil regrets that the Council continues to ignore the threat posed by the existence of a much deadlier type of weapon, namely, nuclear weapons, which are currently being discussed right next door to us. Unfortunately, the Security Council has decided to distance itself from any statement on the risks posed by the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament, choosing to concentrate only on non-proliferation. Reflection by this body on the long-term, systemic impacts of the failure to implement their disarmament commitments on the part of the nuclear-weapon States is long overdue. The Council's Charter responsibilities with regard to global peace and security mean that it cannot escape the fact that nuclear weapons represent the single most dangerous threat to the existence of humankind.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Mr. Logar (Slovenia): I join others in thanking Lithuania for organizing this important Security Council meeting. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General and his team for his report (S/2015/289) and the analysis and recommendations contained therein. I would also like to align Slovenia with the statement made by the representative of the European Union and add that we support the early adoption of the draft resolution on the subject of small arms prepared by the Lithuanian presidency.

The Secretary-General's report identifies the widespread availability of small arms and light weapons as a key enabler of conflicts around the world. Today, we are aware that the illicit trade in small arms has a wide range of humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences that pose a serious threat to peace, safety, security, stability and sustainable development in the affected societies. In many cases, vulnerable social groups — mainly women, girls and children — suffer disproportionately owing to the attendant acts of armed violence. The main reason for that is the illicit trafficking in and, consequently, the wide availability of small arms and light weapons.

The Secretary-General's report also highlights the importance of the recent combined presence of and linkages between transnational organized crime, terrorism and violent extremism. In our view, today's debate should try to answer at least two fundamental questions. First, what should we, the States Members of the United Nations, do to improve the present, dire situation, and secondly, what should the Security Council and the United Nations do in that regard? The Secretary-General's report rightly outlines our key task, one that we should undertake domestically. We should include national export-control mechanisms and stockpile management, ensure the physical protection of arms and ammunition, notably of surplus stockpiles, and adopt national practices aimed at the systematic marking of small arms and light weapons, which should enable the international tracing of those weapons.

In that context, I would mention the particular role that we assign to dialogue with the armaments industry. In most cases, the arms industry tries to behave as all legitimate businesses do: they try to provide new employment, invest in development and pay taxes. That is especially important in times of social and economic crisis, which we still witness. However, in our view, the sensitization of and constant dialogue with the industry is necessary. Producers need to take their share of the responsibility and adopt so-called knowing-my-customer policies. That is why Slovenia actively supports the inclusion of industry representatives among the participants in the first Conference of States Parties of the Arms Trade Treaty, which is scheduled to take place in late August in Mexico.

States that are in a position to do so should financially support international projects relating to security-sector reform; the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of fighters; and the destruction of small arms and light weapons. We encourage and would like to commend the activities of Conflict Armament Research, a non-governmental organization that is implementing a project called iTrace, with the support of the European Union. Member States should also adopt proper legislation and, above all, ratify the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the United Nations Firearms Protocol. The ATT is an important international instrument that we have at our disposal. Unfortunately, only 67 States have become parties to the Treaty. The universalization of the ATT is an important task for our generation. A universal and fully implemented ATT is the first prerequisite for preventing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Slovenia counts on the three main international producers of small arms and light weapons to accede to the ATT as soon as possible.

Internationally, we should also do more to avoid duplication, making use of the synergies among the various existing international processes in the field of small arms and light weapons that take place within the framework of the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty and the United Nations Firearms Protocol. The first opportunity for such a new approach will be the meeting of the experts of the States participating in the review process of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which will take place in a few weeks here in New York.

That brings me to the second question. What can the Security Council do to improve the situation? We could not agree more with the proposal in the Secretary-General's report stating that more attention should be paid to the various sanctions regimes and international embargoes adopted by the Security Council and to streamlining them effectively in their implementation. We also support the proposal to widen the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping missions and add small arms-related tasks.

In conclusion, I would like to underline Slovenia's commitment to doing more to prevent the illicit international transfers of small arms and light weapons. I have no doubt that other delegations share our commitment. Now it is time for the Security Council to act and start leading the way forward. It is not a question of what we should do, but rather what should be our priority. What we need is a strong commitment and political will to start working together effectively.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Sandoval Mendiolea (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico would like to thank Lithuania for convening this open debate and for its proposal to have the Security Council identify synergies between the work of the Council and the relevant instruments aimed at preventing trafficking in small arms and light weapons and at preventing their diversion to non-authorized users. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the issue under discussion today (S/2015/289), and we urge Member States to analyse the recommendations contained therein in order to more systematically and effectively tackle the misuse, diversion and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons and their munitions as threats to international peace and security.

The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) are the sole initiatives adopted by the United Nations to address this problem. We must redouble our efforts to foster synergies between the relevant international instruments, because all of them converge on the single challenge of ensuring that the use of such instruments is supposed to promote peace and security.

My delegation is concerned that the irresponsible sale of and trafficking in small arms and light weapons continues to take an alarming toll in civilian lives around the world. This is a phenomenon that presents a rather complex challenge, as its effects often result in human-rights violations, destabilize societies, threaten the rule of law, exacerbate and prolong armed conflicts, and feed into transnational organized-crime activities. Easy access to such weapons and their possession by civilians without any limitations or effective controls and the lack of adequate regulations have devastating humanitarian consequences, particularly given their impact on such vulnerable groups as women and children.

The stockpiling of weapons for destabilizing purposes is in itself a source of great concern in many regions of the world, particularly those regions bearing the heavy burden of armed violence. No less important is the issue of the diversion of small arms and light weapons for illicit purposes. That is a significant challenge at the domestic level, and we believe it essential that the membership of the Organization make progress on strengthening our collective commitments to eradicate this scourge. At the same time, the United Nations should also do more to ensure the adoption of concrete measures, including national measures, to prevent violations of arms embargoes established by the Security Council.

The most recent of our international instruments, the Arms Trade Treaty, constitutes a historic achievement. It is the first global effort to regulate the trade in conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, and to establish a legal framework for accountability and transparency in international arms transfers. To date, the Treaty has 130 signatures and 67 ratifications, and my country will continue to work to help it achieve universality. The Treaty's recent entry into force, less than two years after its adoption by the General Assembly, is a clear demonstration of the great support it has garnered.

It is for that reason and because of my Government's commitment to the consolidation of the international regulation of the trade in conventional weapons established by the ATT, that Mexico will chair the discussions on the fundamental issues of the ATT and, as I mentioned, will host the first Conference of States Parties to the Treaty, to be held from 24 to 27 August. We will continue to work openly, transparently and inclusively, while taking into consideration the views of the States parties and signatories to the Treaty, the relevant international and regional organizations and the representatives of industry and civil society. As Chair of the Conference, Mexico will encourage inclusive decision-making aimed at building the institutional and procedural regime outlined in the Treaty in such a way as to enable us to make progress in controlling the conventional arms trade, with the two main goals of fostering a responsible arms trade and preventing the misuse of weapons or their diversion to the illicit market.

My delegation recognizes the Council's determination, starting with its adoption of resolution 2117 (2013), to ensure that this issue receives systematic and comprehensive attention in order to prevent the armed conflicts on its agenda from worsening. Diverting weapons and blocking their supply in conflict and post-conflict situations are among the main challenges that the international community has to deal with, and we therefore support the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Council include illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons when considering the geographic and thematic issues on its agenda. It is vital that the Council promote the implementation of the arms embargoes that it imposes, as well as the promotion and implementation of effective programmes for collecting and registering weapons. In that context, we believe that peacekeeping operations, the panels of experts of the sanctions committees and the other actors on the ground should step up their coordination of efforts aimed at exchanging operational information within the scope of their mandates, in order to improve the monitoring and effective implementation of sanctions.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to affirm Mexico's support for women's full and meaningful participation in the policymaking, planning and implementation relating to the fight against the improper use and illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons, in line with the provisions of the relevant

Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Thöresson (Sweden): Sweden aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union. I would like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

I would first like to thank the Lithuanian presidency of the Security Council for taking the initiative of convening this important debate and of launching a draft resolution to follow it up. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his excellent report (S/2015/289) and his briefing today. And I would like to acknowledge the important work of Member States in implementing and developing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as that of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, UNICEF and other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in the field. In addition, I would like to recognize the crime-prevention efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which make up a critical complement to our work.

The theme of today's debate could not be more relevant and timely. As we have heard from many other speakers, the illicit transfer and destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition are key drivers of conflict, and thus continue to undermine international peace and security. The human toll is disastrous. The importance of mainstreaming the issue of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition on the Council's agenda could not be more urgent. The same goes for the arms-control-related findings of the high-level review of United Nations sanctions, of which Sweden is a sponsor. I would like to make four points.

First, we would like to see a sharper focus on ammunition in discussions on small-arms issues. Without ammunition, small arms and light weapons are inoperable. While monitoring transfers of ammunition may be difficult, it is essential if we want to prevent the misuse of existing stocks of small arms. Reporting must be encouraged. Mapping should be strengthened. Tracking and traceability need to be improved. Furthermore, we would like to see ammunition included in the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms, and reporting on ammunition should be fully included in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

Secondly, efforts to prevent the misuse and illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons, along with the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), are crucial to rebuilding peaceful societies. We should make every effort to strengthen United Nations peace-support operations and their mandates with regard to small arms and stockpile security in conflict and post-conflict areas. Poor stockpile security constitutes a serious threat to peace and security, owing to the risk of diversion. And tragic accidents involving stockpiles of ammunition serve as reminders of the immediate threat that they pose to physical security. In that regard, international cooperation and assistance are key. Increased coordination and local ownership are crucial to getting results. We have seen that in successful projects, such as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Moldova and Kenya, where Sweden and other donors and partner countries have worked in close collaboration. Sweden will continue to promote the development of agreed standards and best practices. We will also continue to promote the use of technology to improve the management and security of small arms and ammunition, as well as to strengthen physical and stockpile security, in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Thirdly, the use of weapons has different effects on women and men, boys and girls. Research shows that easily available small arms and light weapons increase the levels of armed violence, which in turn increases the levels of violence against women. However, the reality is far more complex than the commonly held perception that women are always on the receiving end of violence. Young men are still the most common perpetrators, but they are also more likely to become victims of armed violence themselves. In that regard, it is vital to address the male social roles that in many cases shape armed violence. That will continue to be a priority for Sweden.

Without women's full participation in combating the misuse and illicit transfer of small arms, in line with the agenda on the issue of women and peace and security, effective and lasting results cannot be achieved. Women's participation has proved central to sustainable peace and development. However, the reality on the ground shows that there is considerable scope for improvement. Of the 585 peace agreements negotiated in the last two decades, only 92 include references to women. During the same period, fewer than 4 per cent of the signatories of peace agreements, and less than 10 per cent of negotiators, were women. However, that does not mean that women have not been involved. They have been. Sweden will continue to support women's organizations, with a focus on conflict and post-conflict settings, in cooperation with civil society and through the United Nations.

For my final point, I would like to turn to a major positive development. In regulating the international trade in conventional arms and in helping to combat the illicit trade in small arms, the Arms Trade Treaty represents a giant step forward. The ATT's success is the result of the international community's political will and commitment. It shows that political support can bridge traditional divides and lead to real progress, and that tangible results can also be achieved when national security interests are involved. Sweden has long been an active participant in the Arms Trade Treaty process, because we believe in it. The ATT remains a political priority, and we will continue to play an active role in supporting its effective universalization and implementation. For Sweden, the ATT is also important for the reason that it focuses on the potential humanitarian consequences of the arms trade, and thus on human security, which is at the core of Sweden's disarmament and non-proliferation policies. Moreover, for the first time in a binding international instrument, gender-based violence is included as a factor to be considered.

I would like to conclude by referring to the words of the Secretary-General on weapons and ammunition. They are hardware, and, as such, they are physical commodities on which we can take measurable action. Weapons management is concrete in character, and therefore warrants our unflagging attention. We can take action, and we must take action.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Botswana.

Mr. Nkoloi (Botswana): We congratulate Lithuania on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May. We wish you every success in carrying out your mandate, Madam.

We would like to commend the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the President of the Côte d'Ivoire chapter of the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms for their briefings. We thank the Secretary-General for his report on small arms and light weapons issued on 27 April (S/2015/289), which serves as the basis for our discussion today. We take due note of the recommendations contained therein.

Botswana welcomes today's open debate, in the hope that it will lead to concrete recommendations that will significantly contribute to an improvement in the state of human security at the regional, subregional and international levels. Discussions on this subject matter are vital if we are to debate key related issues and better facilitate responses to the challenges posed by the illicit movement of small arms and light weapons. In that context, we reiterate the importance of implementing the provisions of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, resolution 2117 (2013), adopted by the Security Council in September 2013, and all other resolutions adopted under this agenda item.

The achievement of peace and security is of paramount importance to Botswana, and my delegation believes that the ability of States to maintain safety and stability is a precondition for the achievement of sustained economic and social growth. As pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General,

> "Countries suffering from sustained levels of armed conflict or violence are also those furthest from reaching their Millennium Development Goal targets." (*S/2015/289, para. 31*)

In that light, we believe that sustainable development is possible only when the environment is free of crime and violence. It is for that reason that we remain deeply concerned about the uncontrolled manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons across the world, including in my own region, Africa.

There is no doubt that the very presence of those weapons creates tensions in communities that often result in eruptions of conflict in one form or another; innocent civilians, especially women and children, often fall victim to torture, rape and other forms of sexual exploitation. What is disheartening is the fact that the perpetrators of those crimes continue to undermine international humanitarian law and human rights law through their violations of the rights of innocent people, and they are seldom held accountable for those violations.

Like all countries, Botswana is also experiencing problems related to the illicit circulation of small arms, which has led to an increase in criminal activity involving the use of such weapons. The problem is exacerbated by long porous borders, particularly in Southern Africa. We believe that the destruction of surplus, seized, collected, confiscated and forfeited weapons and ammunition is a starting point for reducing the weapons stockpiles available for illicit circulation, thereby reducing the burden of managing unnecessary stockpiles.

The highly destabilizing effect of such weapons compels us, as responsible members of the international community, to exercise great vigilance with a view to ending their illegal trade. In an effort to address that phenomenon, Botswana has entered into bilateral framework agreements with neighbouring countries, through which we cooperate on issues of cross-border crime, regional security and information exchange. I am pleased to note that the joint cooperation agreements among our law enforcement agencies have proved critical to promoting regional stability and providing for the security of our citizens.

The Security Council's deployment of peacekeeping operations and special political missions in war-torn countries around the world is truly commendable. The expansion of those missions in the last decade shows just how instrumental they are in the maintenance of international peace and security. Strengthening military and police capabilities on the ground is also vital for a rapid response when conflicts break out.

I would like to conclude by assuring the Council of Botswana's continued cooperation as we continue to take stock of the status of the implementation of programmes and to identify new challenges and solutions so as to close the gaps that exist in arms control. Peace and security, and ensuring that levels of crime remain low, especially gun-related crime, remain critical. There is no way that our peoples can enjoy a better quality of life if they live in a world that is riddled with violent crime and where small arms and light weapons are easily available. Let us all unite and work together to realize a vision of a safer world, for our own sake and for that of future generations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): I wish to thank you, Madam President, for convening today's timely and important debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his thoughtful briefing to guide our deliberations.

The negative consequences of the misuse of arms — small, light or heavy — are well known and amply documented, as are factors such as illicit trade, brokering, diversion, lax regulations and the weak management of weapons stockpiles. Every day, innocent people, including women and children, fall victim to the murderous designs of terrorists, criminals and insurgents using such weapons. Peacekeepers, police and security forces bear the brunt of that reality in the line of duty. Such lethal instruments of violence are widely available, inexpensive and easy to transport and to conceal.

We concur that such arms are major enablers of criminal violence and conflict. The nexus between organized crime, drug trafficking and the illegal arms trade adds a layer of complexity to an already daunting challenge. The United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms, the International Tracing Instrument and the Firearms Protocol provide solid normative frameworks for addressing the use, regulation and impact of such weapons. All States need to intensify efforts to fully implement those mechanisms.

The Arms Trade Treaty has set global benchmarks for regulating the transfer of those arms. We hope that the Treaty is enabled by its States parties to achieve the goals enshrined in it.

For developing countries, particularly in Africa, the role of international assistance and cooperation is critical. It is the principal enabler of global, regional and national efforts to regulate and prevent the use of such weapons. We therefore call for stronger commitments from the international community to mobilize resources to that end.

The regulation of arms, including through enhanced controls and improved standards for their transfer, is essential. The enforcement of arms embargoes imposed by the Security Council is also vital. Effective marking and increased cooperation in the tracing of weapons are also necessary.

However, such mechanisms focus primarily on regulating the supply side of weapons. There is an urgent need to develop mechanisms and mobilize the political will to address the demand side. That means dealing with unresolved disputes, the root causes of conflicts, the breeding grounds for terrorism and the factors behind the rise in organized crime.

The causes of war are even more important to address than the instruments of war. In order to deal with the growing and unacceptable human cost that such weapons inflict, a comprehensive and integrated approach is required. We wholeheartedly endorse the Secretary-General's call in his report for "a multidimensional approach" (*S/2015/289, para. 21*) that addresses arsenals and ammunition flows, legitimate grievances, past and current human-rights violations and the underlying drivers of conflict.

The current peacekeeping and peacebuilding toolkit, while valuable and essential, needs to be supplemented with more strategic and innovative approaches to conflict prevention and resolution. That means going beyond managing conflicts or their manifestations and investing more in preventing and resolving them. It is perhaps time to initiate a new debate about the linkages between excessive production, trade and the use of those arms and their impact on societies. We know from historical experience that instituting controls on trade and transfer cannot be separated from motivations behind the production of arms.

Similarly, arms acquisition by States motivated by security needs cannot be de-linked from their production and sale, which is driven by profit and politics. It remains a grim irony that weapons that propel and sustain conflicts come from areas or regions that themselves enjoy peace. Only four countries account for two thirds of global arms exports, while developing countries, mainly in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, are major importers. We need to make the entire chain of development, production, trade, transfer and the impact of these arms part of the new global debate.

Pakistan has developed the necessary legislative, regulatory, enforcement and institutional mechanisms to regulate the sale, supply, import and transfer of those arms. An inter-ministerial group addresses those issues in an integrated manner. We have adopted policy guidelines for the export of conventional arms and have established mechanisms to regulate the trade, ownership and use of these arms. We are also taking additional measures, including in the areas of enforcement, imports and licensing. We have regularly filed national implementation reports on the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects that outline national measures taken over the years.

Finally, the Council has addressed the issue of small arms for many years in areas within its purview. There are potential synergies that can be generated between the Council and other processes led by the General Assembly. Given the enormity and complexity of small arms issues, it would be prudent to leverage complementarities while being mindful of respective mandates. We look forward to continuing the debate during the meeting of governmental experts next month.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Okamura (Japan): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate on small arms and light weapons. I welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/289). I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein and Mr. Karamoko Diakité, President of the Côte d'Ivoire chapter of the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms, for their briefings.

Japan has been the lead country working on small arms and light weapons since the 1990s. As is widely known, Japan has been submitting draft resolutions on small arms and light weapons to the First Committee almost every year since 1995; every year since 2000, they have been adopted by consensus.

After 20 years, we have witnessed the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, whose scope includes small arms and light weapons. We congratulate all those who worked towards that achievement and we commend the continuous efforts of the Office for Disarmament Affairs to reach that goal.

Japan will continue its steady efforts. Japan submitted a working paper at the fifth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Next month, the second Meeting of Governmental Experts of the Programme of Action will provide us with an important opportunity to implement recommendations made at the fifth Biennial Meeting, as well as to further efforts on small arms and light weapons at the United Nations. We have submitted a working paper and are determined to contribute to the success of the second Meeting, in support of Ambassador Vlad Lupan, its Chair-designate.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of preventing the illegal transfer or diversion of small arms and light weapons. We have been making great efforts with respect to tracing and collecting such weapons. I am sure those efforts are our priority. However, at the same time, preventing small arms and light weapons from crossing national borders and stopping the flow of such weapons is even more important. I would like to give some examples that demonstrate why.

In the 1990s, the world witnessed one ethnic conflict after another on the Balkan Peninsula. The flow of small arms and light weapons in the background was massive. Small arms were sold in one post-conflict area and flowed into the next. There ensued a sequence of conflicts on the peninsula, from Slovenia to Croatia, to Bosnia and Herzegovina and, finally, to Kosovo. The transfer of small arms and light weapons turned existing ethnic conflicts into armed and bloody ones, inflaming feelings of hatred and vengeance among people. I was appointed chief political officer of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in 1999. Under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bernard Kouchner, UNMIK cooperated with the NATO-led International Security Force in Kosovo (KFOR) in the collection, and above all, the border control of small arms and light weapons. If the ethnic conflict in Kosovo did not produce repercussions on neighbouring countries at that time, it is because of the efforts made by UNMIK and KFOR to prevent the flow of small arms and light weapons from Kosovo.

Mali is another example. After the bloody civil war ended there in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Government of Mali was very focused on the issue of small arms and light weapons and cooperated with the United Nations Development Programme on the collection and destruction of such weapons. Those efforts minimized the risk of the escalation of local conflicts at that time. Unfortunately, however, the collapse of the Al-Qadhafi regime in Libya in 2011 resulted in a tremendous outflow — we can even call it a tsunami — of small arms and light weapons from Libya to countries in the Sahel region, including Mali, and worsened the conflict there. Affected by that tsunami from Libya, Mali experienced a large-scale conflict that risked dividing the whole nation. That situation was also noted this morning in the briefing by Mr. Diakité. We recognize the difficulty of controlling national borders in areas such as the Sahel. Nevertheless, the tragic experience of Mali shows the importance of carefully monitoring the flow of small arms and light weapons and of regulating the international trade in such weapons.

Finally, I would like to underline the importance of implementing on the ground the decisions taken here in New York. We must strengthen efforts in the field. In that regard, the role and capacity-building of peacekeeping operations is essential. Japan has been providing support to countries affected by the diversion of small arms and light weapons through concrete programmes, such as its support for the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Ghana. Japan also provided financial support for the collection of small arms and light weapons and a capacity-building programme in Côte d'Ivoire. We hope other countries will follow suit.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that Japan has led international efforts on small arms and light weapons and is determined to continue doing so.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. I also thank you and the other speakers for drawing attention to the scourge of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which takes a heavy human toll in death and suffering, especially among women and children, while derailing development and destabilizing societies.

In addition, small arms and light weapons sustain conflicts, exacerbate armed violence and aid terrorists and armed groups and national organized crime networks engaged in trafficking human beings, drugs and precious national resources. As a member-observer of the African Union, Kazakhstan notes with great concern the adverse consequences of illicit small arms and light weapons transfers on innocent civilians. We are ready to share best practices with countries of the African continent in implementing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It is only through effective vigilance with regard to these small but deadly weapons that we can reduce human insecurity and provide for humanitarian access and the safety of humanitarian personnel. The havoc caused by the misuse of small arms and light weapons destroys the social fabric of communities and creates flows of refugees and internally displaced persons, thereby pushing families into poverty and increasing the risk of disease and shortages of food and water.

My country stands for conflict prevention, post-conflict recovery, reconstruction and development for war-torn countries in the transformative post-2015 phase. The protection of civilians is also of the utmost significance.

Kazakhstan is also committed to the stability of Afghanistan, our neighbouring country, following the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force after 14 years. With a view to preventing the smuggling of arms and narcotic drugs, we pioneered the establishment of the Islamic Organization for Food Security within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and established the headquarters of that body in our capital city of Astana.

The recent proposal to host in Almaty the new United Nations regional hub would promote sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, disaster-risk reduction and building resilience. The hub would oversee the successful implementation of arms embargoes and regional small arms-related instruments, while strictly adhering to United Nations sanctions, arms embargoes and other measures. That cross-national effort demands well-coordinated United Nations system-wide coherence, in close collaboration with international and regional organizations, together with academia, the media and civil society.

Furthermore, close collaboration between the work of the Security Council and the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons at the international, regional and national levels is of vital importance. The scope of the Arms Trade Treaty, which entered into force last December, encompasses small arms and light weapons and contributes to our effectiveness in increasing transparency with regard to transfers of small arms and light weapons.

We also support the enhanced integration of small arms-related challenges in the mandates of United Nations peace operations, with trained personnel for demilitarization, demobilization and rehabilitation work, especially among child soldiers.

In our capacity as Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in 2010, and of the OIC during 2010 and 2011 — as well as through our ongoing activities with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and others organizations — Kazakhstan is working relentlessly to prevent the proliferation and circulation of such illegal weapons. My country provides information on a regular basis to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and in connection with the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, both of which contribute to keeping the world safe. My country and its neighbours have enacted strict national legislation on exports control and the manufacture, supply and transfer of small arms and light weapons. Our Government has been increasingly successful in uncovering crimes, as a result of which thousands of small arms have been taken out of illegal circulation.

In conclusion, Kazakhstan stands ready to join in the multilateral efforts to prevent the devastation of human life caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Ms. Frankinet (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would like to congratulate Lithuania on its initiative to hold this debate, a debate allowing us to reaffirm and bolster the commitment on the Security Council, on the basis of the Australian initiative and resolution 2117 (2013). Belgium also supports the idea of adopting a new draft resolution based on objectives defined in the concept note circulated by the Lithuanian presidency (S/2015/306, annex). As the Secretary-General underscores in his report,

> "Each crisis or conflict dealt with by the Security Council has its own characteristics.Yet,a key common denominator in all issues on the Council's agenda is that availability, ownership and use of weapons and ammunition significantly determine the dynamics of the crisis." (*S/2015/289, para. 3*)

Too often, civilians, especially women and children, are the primary victims of armed violence and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The availability of the latter is one of the factors that fuels sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict zones. While the fight against the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons cannot by itself resolve these issues, it remains nevertheless an essential component in a comprehensive approach.

Arms embargoes imposed by the Security Council will be effective only if the violations of these embargoes are detected and dealt with, bringing those who breach them to justice. In this respect the sanctions committees and their expert groups play an essential role. Belgium therefore is in favour of including in the mandates of the United Nations missions monitoring of arms embargoes in close cooperation with the sanctions committees and the relevant panels of experts — an approach that is already reflected in resolution 2117 (2003) and in the conclusions of meetings held within the framework of United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The Secretary-General's report referrs to positive experiences of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the role played by the United Nations police units.

Last year, Belgium organized a seminar devoted to the tracing and tracking of illicit weapons in conflict zones, and we included the results of this seminar in our contribution to the 2015 review of the United Nations peacekeeping operations. The tracing of illicit weapons in conflict zones can provide answers to the following questions. Where do non-State actors obtain their weapons and ammunition? Is there any unauthorized re-exporting, and, if so, is the original supplier aware of this? Who are the end-users, brokers and shippers who present a heightened risk of diversion towards conflict zones. Which Governments' stockpiles are sold on the black market and on what scale? Which elements of the armed forces are possibly involved in the diversion of weapons? Do weapons collected as part of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) effort later reappear on the black market?

The trademarks of the black market and the diversion of small arms and light weapons that have been made visible through tracing can be used to improve efforts at controlling weapons. That information can help exporting States in evaluating the risk of diversion before issuing export licenses and to reduce these risks before and during the transfer of these weapons. All of this is required by article 11 of the Arms Trade Treaty. This information can also improve the effectiveness of DDR operations as well as security sector reform operations and the integrated management of borders and better secure weapons stockpiles and arsenals. We support the inclusion of stockpile security, where appropriate, in the mandates of United Nations missions.

All of those results can be achieved only through cooperation and information-sharing. Information on any illicit trafficking identified should therefore be compiled and made accessible to the relevant authorities. That sharing of information should take place at the national, regional and international levels. For that reason, the reports of the groups of experts are essential to the achievement of that end. We also believe that the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs has a role to play in extracting the relevant data from those reports and in compiling it in the appropriate databases.

Regional organizations and exchanges within the framework of the Arms Trade Treaty, bilateral notifications, the broader use of the INTERPOL Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System and non-governmental initiatives, such as the iTRACE project run by Conflict Armament Research, can all also contribute to the tracking and sharing of results.

In 2014, during the fifth Biennial Meeting of States within the framework of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, States noted that technological developments and the design of small arms and light weapons had had an impact on the effectiveness of the marking, registry and tracing of such weapons. They recognized the challenges but also the potential of such developments. Next month, governmental experts will meet at the United Nations in order to ensure the effectiveness in the future of the International Tracing Instrument. The success of that meeting, which could provide input into the 2018 Review Conference on the Programme of Action will be very important in our continued fight against the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Belgium will contribute to those efforts on the basis of a document that we have elaborated along with Germany and other States.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Mamabolo (South Africa): I thank you, Madam President, for organizing this debate. Given your able stewardship, I am confident that you will lead this body to successful and fruitful outcomes in its deliberations. I also join others in thanking the

Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights for their briefings.

My delegation continues to believe that the full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is the only universal instrument available to us to sufficiently address the theme that you have proposed for the membership to consider today. In addition, we trust that the recent entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, which requires States to have effective national arms-control systems, including legislation, will also assist in that regard. We believe that the illicit trade in such weapons exacerbates conflicts, crime and terrorism, and undermines respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Such illicit trade has had devastating consequences in that it leads to trafficking in humans, drugs and certain natural resources.

South Africa fully shares the view presented in your concept note (S/2015/306, annex), Madam, that illicit transfers in small arms and light weapons are a particularly acute problem in Africa, where we have witnessed their recycling from earlier conflicts on our continent. It is alarming to note that non-governmental organizations have estimated the number of illicit small arms in circulation at between 90 and 100 million, most of which affect civilian populations, including innocent women and girls. South Africa has consistently advocated the need for the full implementation of two types of small-arms and light-weapons disarmament measures, namely, proper stockpile management and effective disarmament measures in post-conflict situations. Without sufficient controls over State-owned small arms and light weapons, there is a serious risk of their falling into the hands of armed groups, terrorists and individuals with pure criminal intent. That hampers our shared aim of attaining our development goals, combating economic stagnation, addressing crippled health-care systems and attaining lasting peace. It is indeed an integral part of our collective effort to accomplish our post-2015 development agenda.

My delegation shares the objective set out in today's concept note, namely, that of identifying the challenges related to small arms and light weapons in United Nations peace operations, and the need to integrate small arms and light weapons into initial consultations and issues relating to new operations and the updating of an implementation mandate. That is closely related to stockpile security, border management, record-keeping, the tracing of illicit arms, as well as to the disposal of surplus, surrendered or confiscated small arms and light weapons through their destruction.

Effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes need to be integrated into broader peacebuilding processes. Assisting States to implement commitments under post-conflict agreements to which they are party is key to such processes and fundamental to achieving those goals.

Finally, my delegation wishes to highlight its belief that international cooperation and assistance are among the central pillars of our overall implementation efforts relating to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. That relates not only to taking care of post-conflict peace measures, but most importantly, to stockpile management, where the risk of diversion remains a major potential concern.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mozambique.

Mr. Gumende (Mozambique): At the outset, I would like to extend my warm congratulations to you, Madam, on the accession of the Republic of Lithuania to the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May, and to thank you for inviting me to participate in this important debate devoted to the human cost of the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons.

We take note of the report of the Secretary-General on the theme of this open debate and the recommendations contained therein (S/2015/289).

We share the view that the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons is one of the main sources of the prolonged and exacerbated humanitarian crises in Africa. Small arms and light weapons continue to seriously undermine social and political stability and economic development on the continent, as they fuel conflicts by arming those that perpetrate violence against innocent civilians and those charged with the responsibility of protecting and upholding law and order. Moreover, in an increasingly globalized world, the geographical position of our continent leaves it exposed to exploitation by transnational organized crime, including trafficking in weapons, drugs and persons.

The illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons represents one of the most serious challenges to security and political stability in our countries, as it affects critical areas of development. As a country that overcame a devastating conflict 23 years ago, we know only too well the dreadful consequences of the unlawful access to and misuse of weapons of war on human lives, security and development. Mozambique therefore attaches great importance to forceful action to prevent and combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, with its impact on human life. As such, Mozambique welcomes the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, particularly its focus on the multidimensional nexus between development, peace and security.

Recognizing that challenge, the Government of Mozambique has enacted Decree No. 08/2007 on firearms and explosives, aimed at reducing the circulation, possession and utilization of firearms and ammunition by non-State actors. The law also creates bureaucratic barriers that restrict access to firearms and ammunition, as well as sets up control mechanisms for firearms possessed by ordinary citizens for various purposes.

Apart from the legal reforms, the Government of Mozambique has been closely working with civil society organizations in the framework of the Interministerial Committee for the Prevention, Combat and Eradication of Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons. This governmental body has been playing a critical role in reducing the circulation of firearms through awareness campaigns aiming to identify, seize and destroy obsolete firearms from the 16-year conflict that ended in 1992.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is one of the most serious transnational organized crimes affecting various countries at the same time. We strongly believe that the fight against this threat requires a common and shared responsibility among all Member States and international organizations whose responsibility is to curb the usage of firearms and their leakage into the hands that use them for criminal purposes. In that regard, Mozambique continues to be engaged in regional and international efforts to mitigate the negative consequences of firearms in global development. One such important instrument is the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Furthermore, Mozambique has signed and started the national process of ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty. We strongly believe that this global regulatory framework will complement the ongoing actions under the Plan of Action, contributing to enhanced control of the import, export, transit, transfer and use of arms. We would therefore like to strongly recommend that all Members do their best in order to continue ratifying this important instrument for the benefit of global security and the safe and lawful circulation of firearms.

In 2006, through the Geneva Declaration, and inspired by the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we agreed to "strive to achieve, by 2015, measurable reductions in the global burden of armed violence and tangible improvements in human security worldwide". As we are rushing towards the finishing line of the MDGs and we are deeply engaged in the preparation of the post-2015 development agenda, we take this opportunity to recommend that the elimination of armed violence and of small arms and light weapons in the hands of non-State actors, among other things, which aim to promote peace and security, be consolidated as an integral cornerstone of the sustainable economic development strategies within the context of the noble goal of building and sustaining peaceful societies.

I would like to conclude my remarks by reiterating the commitment of Mozambique to the goals and initiatives set out in the Geneva Declaration, as well as in the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Mozambique also reaffirms its commitment to the South African Development Community Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials, in particular when dealing with armed violence, to strengthen community and individual voluntary participation in arms control and destruction across our region.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Roet (Israel): Let me begin by thanking you, Madam President, for Lithuania's able stewardship of the Security Council this month and for holding this very important debate, as more than half a million people die every year as a result of the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

Last year, Israel was proud to sign the Arms Trade Treaty. Israel supports the principles and goals of the Treaty and believes it is an important step towards better regulating the trade in arms and preventing weapons from reaching terrorist groups and rogue actors. Israel has passed significant pieces of legislation to guide its own robust export-control system.

In the Middle East, the illicit trafficking in small arms is a big problem. Small arms are the weapons of choice for terrorists who seek to spread fear and undermine stability. For years Iran has destabilized and radicalized the Middle East. In recent years it has also intensified its campaign to smuggle weapons to its terrorist proxies, including the Houthis in Yemen, Shiite militias in Iraq, Hizbullah in Lebanon and the Syrian Golan and Hamas in Gaza.

Last summer, Hamas terrorists fired over 3,800 rockets and mortars from Gaza towards Israeli civilian communities, an average of 1 projectile every 10 minutes. One of those mortars hit the home of Gila and Doron Tragerman. Their four-year-old son, Daniel was playing in the living room when the mortar shell slammed into their house and killed the little boy. Two days later, Ze'ev Etzion and Shahar Melamed from Kibbutz Nirim were also killed by mortars fired by terrorists in Gaza.

The grim reality is that small arms will continue to take the lives of innocent civilians unless the Council takes meaningful steps to enforce compliance with sanctions and arms embargoes, particularly with regard to Iran. The Iranian regime regularly transfers tons of weapons and munitions to Hizbullah terrorists in blatant violation of four Security Council resolutions — 1559 (2004), 1701 (2006), 1747 (2007) and 1929 (2010). If the international community continues to be missing in action, those resolutions will continue to be dead on arrival.

In Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, terrorists groups have taken advantage of the chaos and instability to raid unsecured weapons caches. After securing the weapons, terrorist groups recruit and kidnap young boys to fight their battles. In Yemen, for instance, seven-year-old Hassan was recruited by Houthi rebels to man checkpoints. Instead of learning to read and write, Hassan's only lessons are how to use his Kalashnikov rifle. Like Hassan, countless young boys have been forced to give up their childhoods to fight someone else's war. The next generation of children in our region deserves a brighter future — a future without hate, without conflict and without terror.

Every nation is threatened by the proliferation, illegal transfer and misuse of small arms. Following the downfall of Muammar Al-Qadhafi, armouries brimming with assault rifles, grenades and surface-to-air missiles were plundered by militants. Thousands of Libya's 20,000 surface-to-air missiles have fallen into the hands of non-State actors and terrorists. Similarly, the uncontrolled trafficking of shoulder-fired missiles known as man-portable air-defence systems (MANPADS), is of particular concern to Israel. In 2002, Al-Qaida-affiliated terrorists in Mombassa, Kenya, fired two surface-to-air missiles at an Israel Airlines plane. The missiles narrowly missed, but the attack marked a turning point: terrorists were using small arms to target civilian airliners.

In recent years, the Middle East has seen the proliferation of thousands of MANPADS. Misleadingly categorized as small arms and light weapons, MANPADS have the potential to cause mass casualties and undermine stability. The threat is very real and demands the immediate attention of the international community.

At this moment, as we speak, smuggling ships are steaming across the high seas, cargo trucks are snaking across mountain passes and small aircraft packed with illegal weapons are flying low to avoid detection. The mortars and missile launchers that they carry could take dozens of innocent lives and spark the next major conflict.

Terrorists and their backers depend on divisions in the international community to keep their operations afloat. No nation is free from responsibility, and no nation can escape the consequences of inaction. The Council must take a bold first step by holding accountable those Member States that arm, train and fund terrorists. The failure to act today will invite disaster tomorrow.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Zehnder (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Over the past 15 years, a broad range of instruments and initiatives — national, regional and global — have been developed to prevent the illicit transfer, the destabilizing accumulation and the misuse of small arms and light weapons. Given the immense negative effects of these arms, the international community must redouble its efforts in that regard. My statement will focus on three challenges.

In order to comprehensively respond to the impact of illicit small arms and light weapons on peace, security and development, a holistic approach that takes into account both supply and demand for small arms and light weapons is necessary.

On the demand side, addressing the nexus between armed violence and development is particularly important. In 2006, Switzerland, alongside the United Nations Development Programme, launched the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. The 113 States that support the initiative are dedicated to developing measures to reduce armed violence in order to enhance sustainable development at the global, regional and national levels. The current goal of the Geneva Declaration is to ensure that the experience gained is firmly anchored in the post-2015 development agenda.

On the supply side, lifecycle management of Government-owned weapons and ammunition should be improved. In that regard, existing instruments, such as the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines and the International Small Arms Control Standards, play an important role. On the one hand, they contribute to preventing the diversion of State-owned weapons and ammunition to civilians, criminals or armed groups; on the other, they mitigate the risk of unplanned explosions at munition sites.

The humanitarian and security implications of poorly managed ammunition stockpiles are highly alarming. Measures at the international level lack cohesiveness. Switzerland will therefore organize an international meeting, to be held in Geneva in November, to identify the possible next steps to improve the safety and security of stockpiles of conventional ammunition. Furthermore, efforts addressing the supply side of small arms and light weapons are particularly relevant in post-conflict situations. For that reason, Switzerland fully supports the inclusion in United Nations peacekeeping operations mandates of a standardized approach to the life-cycle management of small arms and light weapons, including ammunition.

My delegation welcomes the fact that the Secretary-General's report on small arms and light weapons (S/2015/289) recognizes the gendered nature of armed violence. Switzerland takes gender-specific aspects into account in its programmes and projects aimed at countering the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons.

Switzerland acknowledges the central role of instruments such as the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the International Tracing Instrument and the Firearms Protocol. The entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was a milestone. Only its universalization and its thorough implementation can seriously tackle illicit trafficking and the excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons. Switzerland is dedicated to those goals and therefore supports, inter alia, capacity-building efforts and measures that promote the Treaty's universality. In order to maintain its commitment to the Arms Trade Treaty and to contribute to its inclusive and efficient implementation, Switzerland has offered to host the ATT secretariat in Geneva.

In conclusion, Switzerland, like other States present in the Chamber today, encourages the Security Council to adopt a draft resolution that would strengthen the principles set out in resolution 2117 (2013).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Rieckens (Austria): Austria is grateful to Lithuania for convening this important and timely meeting of the Security Council. The concept note (S/2015/306, annex) prepared for this meeting clearly delineates the problem and is highly useful for guiding the discussion.

Austria fully aligns itself with the statement delivered today on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The human cost of the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons is indeed appalling. The problem transcends national boundaries, making it absolutely imperative for States to cooperate with each other in order to effectively mitigate the situation. Austria's position on the issue is, of course, in full alignment with European Union policies, based on the 13 January 2006 EU strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

For Austria, a chief concern around small arms and light weapons has always been the impact of their unauthorized spread on the humanitarian cause of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. That concern has been acknowledged by this very body. For instance, in operative paragraph 29 of resolution 1894 (2009), which Austria initiated, the Security Council noted:

> "the excessive accumulation and destabilizing effect of small arms and light weapons pose a considerable impediment to the provision of humanitarian assistance and have a potential to exacerbate and prolong conflicts, endanger civilians and undermine security and the confidence required for a return to peace and stability".

All exporters of small arms bear a particular responsibility to promote the cause of effective small arms and light weapons control nationally, notably by implementing strict and effective export controls, as well as at the international level. Therefore, Austria is an active participant in the use of the important international instruments in the area, such as the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, along with the concomitant International Tracing Instrument; the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies; and most recently, the Arms Trade Treaty.

Hosting both the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which assists States in the implementation of the Firearms Protocol, and the Wassenaar Arrangement, the Austrian capital Vienna has become a focal point of international expertise on issues with a direct bearing on small arms and light weapons control. Incidentally, let me say that this is a strong point in favour of Vienna's current bid to accommodate the future secretariat of the Arms Trade Treaty.

At the practical level, the Austrian Ministry of Defence is currently engaged in a number of long-term assistance projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Senegal. At the regional level, the Austrian Ministry of Defence also supports a number of respective activities in South-East Europe and East Africa. These cooperation activities aim at capacity-building and knowledge transfer with regard to the management of national stockpiles, based on the International Small Arms Control Standards, as well as on the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines and on the reduction of surpluses of small arms and light weapons and corresponding ammunition.

Austria is keenly aware that despite considerable efforts at the national and international levels, the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons continue to pose a serious threat to international peace and security. It is therefore right to put the pressing issue on the agenda of the Security Council. We call upon the members of this body to use this debate as an impulse for further work, which is urgently needed.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. Ružička (Slovakia): I would like to thank Lithuania for organizing this very timely and important debate on small arms and light weapons.

Just as the spread of small arms and light weapons tends to promote conflict, any effort to curb their proliferation can significantly contribute to stability and peacebuilding. I would like to recognize the important contribution of the Security Council to international efforts on this matter, including the adoption of the crucial resolution 2117 (2013). We also hope for the successful outcome of the Council's deliberations concerning a new draft resolution under the Lithuanian presidency.

Slovakia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union, but allow me to share a few remarks in my national capacity.

As mentioned earlier, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition remain a phenomenon that both ignites and sustains violent conflicts and organized crime within communities. Their excessive accumulation has a wide range of humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences in many countries and regions of the world. More than ever before, it is the civilian population that bears the brunt of armed conflict and organized crime in which the majority of the human cost is caused by the use of small arms. Small arms also facilitate a vast spectrum of human rights abuses, including gender-based violence.

The problem of small arms and light weapons remains a very complex issue as the international community continues to develop appropriate policy responses at the global level. The 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects laid the foundation for action countering the illicit trade and uncontrolled circulation of small arms and light weapons at the national, regional and global levels. I would like to emphasize the importance that Slovakia attaches to the continued and full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action and to the outcome document of the fifth Biennial Meeting of States.

All States should enhance their efforts to build national capacity for their effective implementation of the Programme of Action. International cooperation and assistance remain essential and complementary to national implementation efforts, as well as to those at the regional and subregional levels. I would also like to highlight the importance of improving the management of stockpiles of small arms and light weapons, particularly in conflict and post-conflict areas, and the need to look further into the impact of new technologies on the manufacture, design and storage of weapons. We call upon all States to implement the International Tracing Instrument.

Upon its entry into force on 24 December 2014, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) became a very significant addition that complements and bolsters the existing arsenal of international and regional efforts to address the problems associated with irresponsible and illegal small arms transfer and small arms proliferation. Slovakia ratified the Treaty in April 2014, and we are happy to see the growing number of ATT signatures and ratifications. We strongly advocate universal adherence to and full implementation of the ATT.

Key aspects of efforts to prevent the outbreak or resumption of violent conflict fueled by the uncontrolled spread of small arms include enhancing border control to prevent illicit trafficking, placing control of armed forces in the hands of legitimate State authorities, and establishing an inclusive, democratic, political, fair and transparent judicial mechanism. To be effective, such measures must go hand in hand with enhancing general security, and that requires reforming the police and armed forces and introducing mechanisms to promote reconciliation and accountability for human rights abuses.

This brings me to security sector reform. Security sector reform has become central to the work of the United Nations in reducing violence, addressing transnational organized crime, promoting human rights and contributing to overall stability. By unanimously adopting resolution 2151 (2014), the Security Council underscored the importance of security sector reform in stabilizing countries recovering from conflict. In order to implement resolution 2151 (2014), it will be important to ensure the integration of security sector reform into peace processes, national reconciliation frameworks and other political platforms.

It is imperative to ensure that such efforts are linked to political engagement that fosters national ownership and commitment to the inclusiveness, responsiveness and accountability of security forces. Furthermore, mandates for security sector reform support have increased dramatically in number and complexity over the past seven years. The ongoing reviews of peace operations and of the peacebuilding architecture are critical in addressing the identified challenges and laying the foundations for the implementation of resolution 2151 (2014).

Slovakia will remain committed to that goal and, as co-chair of the Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform, it will pursue the implementation of the resolution. Last but not least, as part of the overall effort to strengthen the links between peace and security, development and human rights, I would like to highlight the importance of adequately promoting and strengthening the aspects of the rule of law within the post-2015 development agenda.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Mukerji (India): We thank the Lithuanian delegation for organizing this debate. We compliment you, Madam, on the very useful concept note (S/2015/306, annex) circulated earlier, and we also thank the briefers from this morning. We note that the Security Council had occasion to discuss this issue in depth in 2013 when adopting resolution 2117 (2013). Given its cross-cutting nature, this issue is also featured in numerous other resolutions and presidential statements of the Council.

We must bear in mind that there is consensus within the international community, as expressed in various General Assembly resolutions, on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as the main framework for measures to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. Nothing must be done to detract from that process, which is inclusive, universal and consensus-based.

India has supported the full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action. We contributed to the success of the second United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action, held in 2012, and to that of subsequent biennial meetings. We look forward to the third Review Conference in 2018. India shares the concerns of the international community on the adverse security, political, socioeconomic and humanitarian impact in States affected by illicit transfers and the diversion of small arms and light arms to terrorists, illegal armed groups and unauthorized recipients. Insecurity and instability spawned by cross-border terrorism impact innocent civilians, particularly women and children, and cause large-scale displacement. India has been a victim of cross-border terrorism for decades. In addition, there is a huge cost to the development agenda within affected States and across regions.

The easy availability of such weapons in large numbers and the easy access often provided by some States as deliberate policy have been two of the main reasons for the growth of terrorism in various parts of the world. Of late, we note with concern the use of such weapons against United Nations peacekeepers by armed groups and terrorists. Diversion of such arms has also been a major problem. The scourge of international terrorism cannot be defeated if this trend continues. The strict implementation of the arms embargo covered under Security Council sanctions regimes, such as that established by resolution 1267 (1999), is important in that context.

The focus for international cooperation should continue to be on the supply side of the equation, while encouraging effective measures on the demand side, which is under national jurisdictions. Various events have sharpened the focus on some of the deficiencies of the Arms Trade Treaty, deficiencies that India had highlighted during the negotiations, in particular, whether the Treaty could make any meaningful impact on illicit trafficking in conventional arms and their illicit use by terrorists and unlawful non-State actors. In our view, these gaps in the Treaty weaken our ability to address a major source of international instability.

India follows a policy of responsibility and restraint in the export of conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons. We have put in place an export control system that is at par with international standards. We implement all the obligations arising out of extant Security Council resolutions on arms embargoes. Let me reiterate my country's firm commitment to preventing the misuse of small arms and light weapons and thereby continuing to contribute to the global fight against terrorism.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): Madam President, at the outset, I would like to thank you for convening this open debate and for your concept note (S/2015/306, annex). We also thank the Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the President of the Cote d'Ivoire chapter of the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms for their respective contributions. We also thank the Secretary-General for his report on small arms and light weapons (S/2015/289). The report contains many useful recommendations.

Illegal small arms and light weapons continue to be the weapons of choice in stocking and sustaining conflicts with a devastating impact in far too many regions. The lack of a strong regulatory framework on the arms trade, related weak border controls, corruption, stock management tracing training and the illegal diversion and use of small arms and light weapons are vital challenges. As a strong supporter of the three pillars of the responsibility to protect, Indonesia remains deeply committed to continuing to uphold this noble imperative in consonance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

We also fully recognize that illegal small arms and light weapons have disturbed the peace and well-being of many societies and the proliferation of those weapons exacerbates the challenges to the responsibility to protect. More often than not, these weapons, coupled with unresolved grievances, poverty, wide income disparity, misgovernance, injustice and human rights abuses by State and non-State actors result in a toxic mix.

Terrorism, organized crime, drugs and human trafficking, among other ills, flourish in such conditions. Indonesia therefore stresses a comprehensive and well-supported approach to tackling the menace of illicit small arms and light weapons, in which States remain responsible for regulating their legitimate arms trade, as well as curbing and eliminating the possession and use of illicit weapons. When they require assistance with their capabilities related to the control of small arms and light weapons, the United Nations and international partners give them the help they need.

It is worrying that despite the fact that it is well over a decade since the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the illicit trade in and the use of small arms and light weapons continue to imperil many societies. Indonesia urges the relevant national actors to do what is necessary, and calls for robust international cooperation and assistance in implementing the Programme of Action.

We note that the Arms Trade Treaty has entered into force. Its merits notwithstanding, it is essential that the legitimate interests of States that import and export arms be considered equitably, and that the Treaty be exploited in a transparent, non-discriminatory and balanced way, and not so that some exporting States can pursue particular political agendas.

The importance of nationally identified, nationally prioritized and nationally owned disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform in conflict-affected countries within a framework of peacebuilding, peacemaking and development cannot be emphasized enough. At the same time, Governments, the United Nations and the international community must also have zero tolerance for violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws. We must work together to build a better global culture that inculcates rights and responsibilities and upholds the rule of law for everyone.

The proliferation of illegal weapons is both a driver and a symptom of insecurity and instability. Effective national efforts, with greater international support, will help to produce good governance and justice and ensure rights and benefits for citizens, raising the stakes for everyone to strengthen peace. Such an environment, with a greater emphasis on the peaceful and equitable resolution of conflicts by the United Nations and States, will help efforts to defeat illegal small arms and light weapons and reduce the space in which such weapons proliferate. Let us work together to help the affected countries raise their capacities and resources, and strengthen a global edifice based on rights and law that can eliminate the diversion and use of these weapons. For its part, Indonesia will continue to play its role in that fight with full resolve.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria): I would like to congratulate Lithuania on its presidency of the Council for this month. I am also grateful for the concept note that has been circulated (S/2015/306, annex), which we believe will guide our deliberations to a successful conclusion. I would like to thank the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for their insightful presentations. My delegation also takes note of the recommendations included in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/289).

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to threaten peace, security and stability in many countries and regions around the world, particularly North Africa and the Sahel region. In every aspect, the illicit trade in weapons and their misuse constitute a real threat to peace and security at all levels, national, regional and international. That trade is also a source of supply and financing for terrorist groups and organized crime and therefore an ongoing concern for my country.

Algeria, which is directly affected by such criminal activities, has continued to deploy every possible effort all along its frontiers to curb the arms trafficking by illegal cross-border networks that fuels terrorist activities in the region. In addition to adapting its existing national legislation and regulations, Algeria has taken numerous steps to strengthen its operational readiness to counteract the actions of criminal and terrorist groups. In our proven commitment to regional peace and security, we have made every effort to contribute to peace processes in our immediate environment, as well as within the regional groups we belong to. At the Euro-Mediterranean level, between the two rims of the Mediterranean Sea, Algeria is working to foster a common understanding of security issues and multi-dimensional cooperation, including in combating illicit trading in small arms and light weaponry.

Based on its national experience, Algeria reaffirms that the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, along with the International Tracing Instrument, are more relevant than ever. We continue to emphasize the importance of their full, balanced and effective implementation. We would also like to stress that international cooperation and assistance are essential to implementing those two instruments. Algeria has ratified several international instruments relating to conventional weapons, as well as to transnational organized crime and combating terrorism. We would also like to stress the importance of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. We take this opportunity to announce that Algeria recently ratified the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, as well as its Protocols I, III and IV.

Any form of violence against civilians, women and children that results from the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is unacceptable. Unfortunately, statistics show that such violence continues to be pervasive all over the world. It is therefore essential that we intensify our efforts at all levels, particularly in terms of prevention and awareness. Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the United Nations has adopted specific policy directives aimed at achieving gender equality in peacekeeping operations. If we are to further those policies, we should ensure that the United Nations can advance the deployment of women protection advisers and gender advisers in both its peacekeeping and political missions, as well as in humanitarian operations.

In our view, effectively combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons requires a comprehensive and integrated approach based on a combination of political, economic, military and security factors. Algeria is in favour of a unified strategy designed to deal with problems that are prevalent in the Sahel, such as terrorism, transnational organized crime, hostage-taking and drug trafficking. We would like to emphasize that in pursuit of the goal of contributing to international peace and security, all measures aimed at combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons should be undertaken in full conformity the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including the right to self-determination of all peoples, and taking into account the particular situation of peoples under colonialism or other forms of alien domination or foreign occupation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Schieb (Germany): Small arms and light weapons fuel and sustain violent conflicts. We are forced to witness that on a daily basis in crisis hotspots around the globe. The illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a major cause of massive human suffering that can take many forms: civilian casualties, forced displacement or humanitarian crises. To reduce this suffering, it is vital to implement a more effective control of small arms and light weapons, embedded into a robust framework of security sector reform and the rule of law.

The draft resolution put forward by Lithuania and the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/289) contain many valuable ideas and recommendations. Germany is ready to join forces with other Member States to put these ideas into practice. Let me highlight a few points.

First, the mandates of United Nations missions should include appropriate, feasible and adaptable control elements for small arms and light weapons. We appreciate proposals to strengthen the implementation of arms embargos, including those for better cooperation among peacekeeping missions, sanctions committees and expert panels. In this context, let me point out the relevant results that the high-level review of United Nations sanctions, which was sponsored by Australia, Germany, Greece, Finland and Sweden, has identified.

Secondly, Germany has supported the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects since its inception. In the Group of States Interested in Practical Disarmament Measures, we facilitate the dialogue between countries requesting assistance and potential donors.

Thirdly, Germany's focus is on small arms and light weapons activities in Africa. We chose the extended Sahel region for a new pilot project on improving control coordination together with the African Union, as part of our Group of Seven (G-7) presidency. One main lesson learned is that close cooperation and coordination among the numerous national and international actors are crucial.

Fourthly, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) represents a major success and has the potential to exert a significant positive influence on small arms control globally. It complements other regimes and draws a clear link between the international arms trade and human rights violations. Germany supports the implementation of the ATT with several projects worldwide, including via the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation.

Fifthly and lastly, small arms control policy and regulations need to keep track of new technological developments. The increasing use of new materials poses a challenge to marking, registering and tracing, as stipulated in the International Tracing Instrument and the Firearms Protocol, possibly demanding clarifications or amendments.

In conclusion, we have achieved a lot, but much more still needs to be done to put an end to the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons and its human cost. One of the several important challenges pointed out is improved coordination among Member States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations. Germany pays particular attention to this within the framework of its current G-7 presidency and will continue to do so during our presidency of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe next year.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): While aligning myself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union, I would like to offer some remarks on a national basis.

At the outset, I wish to express Italy's sincere appreciation to Lithuania for convening this debate and all its efforts to ensure an effective follow-up to this process. I would also like to reiterate Italy's enduring commitment to actively participating in multilateral efforts aimed at curbing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW), with particular reference to multilateral forums.

This meeting on the human cost of the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of such weapons further underscores the vital importance of addressing the problem, since small arms, light weapons and related ammunition are fuelling current regional conflicts. Resolution 2117 (2013), which we highly commend, is but the most recent of many resolutions clearly highlighting the threat posed by the destabilizing flow of these weapons to peace and international security. In that respect, it is worth recalling the regional dimension of the problem, recognized as crucial from the very beginning of the process. My country believes that the countries of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have progressively developed a core of common understandings and best practices that might be of great use in shaping consensus at the global level — hence, the pivotal role played by regional and subregional organizations, as stressed in the same resolution.

Furthermore, Italy welcomes the adoption of resolution 2195 (2014) on the fight against transnational threats, including terrorism, organized crime and the trafficking of weapons. Such threats were recently addressed by the Assistance Strategy Committee, which, under the auspices of the Roma-Lyon Group on Counterterrorism and Anti-Crime, adopted a West Africa strategic assistance framework in November 2014. This strategic framework aims to better coordinate donor assistance against serious and organized crime. Italy is ready to contribute to this endeavour in the framework of a regional conference with States and regional organizations in the Sahel and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

Africa is particularly affected by armed violence fuelled by the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. We have witnessed with great concern that the proliferation of conventional arms stemming from Libyan arsenals has largely contributed to the destabilization of the wider region. One of the biggest accumulation in recent times of small arms and light weapons, as well as man-portable air defence system stocks, is now occurring in Libya, which is estimated to be the largest for a non-producing country in the world. Arms originating from this country have been identified throughout the region. The primary motive for such stockpiling is business rather than use. The illicit flow of weapons, drugs and migrants has indeed clustered around certain hubs in Libya and is exerting socioeconomic effects, as well as security ones. Given the cross-border nature of the accumulation of such weapons and ammunition, Italy believes that the only way forward is to secure arms, provide capacity-building to border guards and the police, and increase regional cooperation. We stand ready to assist Libya, as well as other African States, in implementing their border security and weapons control capacity.

Italy has been active within the European Union in elaborating ways of curbing the destabilizing accumulation and misuse of SALW and their ammunition. I can assure the Council that my country, along with its European Union partners, will continue to offer its cooperation to interested States, taking into consideration the role of up-to-date technology and best practices in physical security and stockpile management, as well as in marking and tracing weapons. We indeed consider the tracing of illicit SALW in conflict zones to be a fundamental prerequisite for finding ways to tackle the illicit flows of such weapons to areas affected by armed conflict or instability. The patterns of illicit trade and diversion that become visible through tracing can be used to enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement and arms control measures designed to fight illicit proliferation.

Moreover, greater clarity and uniformity are required if we wish to effectively combat illicit trafficking while not harming legal commercial interests and legal trade, consistent with national and international obligations. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is in this regard a balanced and broad-based text, the result of comprehensive and inclusive negotiations, in which all Member States' views have been reflected. We believe that the Treaty has the potential to contribute significantly to international peace and security by regulating the international trade in conventional arms, making it more responsible and transparent, and eradicating illicit arms trafficking. Furthermore, the inclusion of the prevention of gender-based violence in the ATT can make a dramatic difference for women, who are among the most vulnerable victims of armed violence and conflicts.

Finally, I wish to underline the importance of keeping the process — national coordination activities, regional seminars and United Nations conferences — open to the participation of all potentially concerned constituencies. Non-governmental organizations and private industries are precious partners in our endeavour. Their active presence in our meetings would provide us with comments, analysis and proposals that are extremely useful, as they lead us to consider relevant issues from perspectives that are complementary to the ones of national administrations. Ultimately, they remarkably help us develop a more focused and comprehensive understanding of the problems we are faced with and their possible solutions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya.

Mr. Andambi (Kenya): Kenya aligns its statement with the statement made earlier by the observer of the African Union.

On behalf of my delegation, I wish to congratulate you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of May. I and applaud the manner in which you have steered the Council as President. I would also like to express my delegation's appreciation to you for convening today's open debate and providing us with a detailed concept note (S/2015/306, annex) to guide the debate. I am also grateful to the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for their detailed briefings on the matter. I also wish to thank all the previous speakers for their insightful remarks.

My delegation has taken note with appreciation of the Council's continued attention to small arms and light weapons as a threat to international peace and security through its various resolutions, high-level meetings, the Arms Trade Treaty of 2014 and other thematic efforts to address the destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, particularly during armed conflict. In that regard, we wish to reiterate our support for presidential statement S/PRST/2007/24 and for resolution 2117 (2013) and its recommendations. Kenya has taken important measures to fully implement the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. My delegation looks forward to participating fully in the United Nations Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and light weapons in June 2015.

The effects of the availability and misuse of small arms have long been felt throughout Kenyan society. By virtue of its geographical location, Kenya has suffered immensely from the effects of the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons, which have caused monumental human suffering. This is evident from the various terrorist attacks that have been witnessed in the country in recent times. Similarly, unprecedented high levels of illicit small arms and light weapons among the pastoralist communities in northern parts of the country have been associated with persistent insecurity and such criminal activities as cattle rustling, poaching and armed robberies.

Kenya continues to strengthen its policy and legislative measures to address loopholes in the law that make it difficult for the Government to deal with insecurity. In 2014, we passed the Security Amendment Act, which amends 22 pieces of legislation aimed at enhancing the security of the country. The Firearms Act is one of the pieces of legislation that was amended to tighten controls on flows of small arms and light weapons and the costs of non-compliance. However, national policies alone will not suffice unless stability in the Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia, is fully restored. This informs Kenya's deep involvement in regional peace and stabilization efforts, including being an integral part of the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia and the mediation effort for South Sudan led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

My delegation recognizes that the proper management of national stockpiles of small arms and light weapons is essential to reducing the risk of the diversion of weapons to the illicit trade — illegal armed groups, including terrorist organizations. Kenya continues to destroy recovered illicit weapons in order to prevent the risk of diversion and is now in the process of initiating the marking of civilian-licensed weapons. However, we strongly believes that marking at the point of manufacture can have a huge impact in improving the traceability of the weapons. To strengthen the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument, Kenya is taking measures to improve national marking, equipment acquisition, coordination, record keeping and training capacities of entities involved in the interdiction of small arms and light weapons.

Kenya is keen to foster regional cooperation with its neighbours to reduce the continued transfer and misuse of small arms and light weapons in the region, particularly by criminal groups and other illegal armed groups. In that respect, we are actively involved and progressively cooperating with various United Nations agencies, the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the East African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization, the East African Community and other regional efforts and programmes to deal with the menace, including stockpile management and tracing programmes. My country has been at the forefront of initiatives to enhance information exchanges and intelligence-sharing with neighbouring States on illicit activities and the actors involved. Similarly, Kenya has been conducting maritime operations to curtail trafficking in illicit small arms and light weapons.

Despite the measures taken and the achievements highlighted, Kenya faces challenges in implementing its national programme of action on small arms and light weapons. Instability in Somalia and South Sudan, and lately in Yemen, continues to pose the risk of undermining current efforts. Kenya's long and porous borders with Somalia predisposes it to illicit inflows of small arms and light weapons irrespective of current efforts and initiatives to mark the deployed national stockpiles. The country also has limited forensic and ballistic technological capacity to profile weapons, which has impeded its ability to effectively monitor the use of small arms and light weapons in criminal activities.

In conclusion, let me assure the Council of my delegation's continued commitment to support the implementation of measures and efforts to eradicate the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons, for the best benefit of the global community and in the interest of maintaining international peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Paraguay.

Mr. González Franco (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his report (S/2015/289). I also thank the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Mr. Karamoko Diakité from Côte d'Ivoire for their respective briefings. On behalf of the Republic of Paraguay, allow me also to congratulate you, Madam, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council, making possible this open debate on an issue that is currently of crucial importance to many societies around the world.

For us, the fact that the Security Council has decided to organize an open debate on this matter clearly indicates that there is a need to complement and coordinate efforts with initiatives being taken by Member States in this high-level political decision-making forum, and to link it with other, broader areas, such as the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

The serious scourges that are devastating a number of countries around the world — such as terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime, among others — are closely linked to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Therefore, the mechanisms established under the United Nations Programme of Action and other complementary mechanisms are of crucial importance in efforts to counter that threat in a timely manner and to facilitate cooperation among States.

The biennial report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons (S/2015/289) is a commendable effort to synthesize the joint efforts taken by the international community to progressively eradicate the illicit trafficking in those weapons. While there are various examples of progress towards the gradual elimination of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, Paraguay believes that it is necessary to redouble efforts in the control of transfers, marking and tracing, the regulation of brokering and trafficking in border areas. In that regard, role of international cooperation and assistance is vital, as is the setting up of a mechanism to build trust between States and cooperating entities.

In addition, special mention should be given to the recent entry into force, in December 2014, of the Arms Trade Treaty, to which my country is one of the almost 70 States parties. In our view, recognition of this instrument by States is a sign of commitment in the area of disarmament, and in particular, the elimination of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the serious consequences of their use.

There is virtually no disagreement among members of the international community on the tragic consequences of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. There is also a high level of agreement on the predominant role that these weapons play in eroding and destroying societies. They increase armed violence and they undermine respect for human rights in general, and international humanitarian law in particular. The figure of over half a million deaths per year as a result of violent acts — many of them cases in which small arms and light weapons play a role — could continue to grow if corrective measures are not taken.

Paraguay therefore considers it important to improve stockpile security systems as well as warehousing for firearms, ammunition and explosives in accordance with international standards. We also believe that existing mechanisms should be enhanced to encourage the destruction of obsolete and confiscated weapons and ammunition, for which it is necessary to have technical assistance from specific organizations and cooperating countries.

In conclusion, we must remember that most of the victims related to small arms and light weapons come more from situations in which ordinary, everyday acts of violence are committed than from war situations, which makes us once again urge the international community to focus not only on conflict and post-conflict situations, but on the causes that allow significant sectors of our societies have access to a huge variety of small arms and light weapons with the tragic consequences that affect our citizens on a daily basis.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): I thank you, Madam President, for convening today's important meeting. We highly appreciate Lithuania's contribution to efforts to address the diverse challenges posed by small arms and light weapons.

Small arms and light weapons are the predominantly used weapons in a vast majority of armed conflicts today. The flows of small arms into conflict zones have fuelled violence, undermined peacebuilding efforts and have had a catastrophic humanitarian impact on civilians, especially women and children.

Building upon a number of initiatives, including the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, the international community recently took a momentous step in efforts to address this challenge by adopting and bringing into force the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). This landmark treaty establishes, for the first time, a comprehensive norm to prevent arms transfers that lead to serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. We believe that the faithful implementation of the ATT will help curb the irresponsible flow of small arms to conflict zones and perpetrators of war crimes and other atrocities. The Republic of Korea is taking steps to ratify the Treaty at the earliest possible time.

While States have the primary responsibility to tackle this challenge, the Security Council also has a vital role to play in addressing both the supply- and demand-driven aspects of arms transfers. With its legally binding arms embargoes, the Security Council can contribute to the prevention of arms flows to conflict regions. The Council can strengthen the role of peacekeeping missions in monitoring arms embargoes on the ground. Examples like the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, where dedicated arms-embargo monitoring units were established, offers a good precedent. Improving information-sharing among States, sanctions committees and peace missions will also contribute to the effective implementation of these embargoes. On the demand side of illicit arms transfers, an equally urgent task is to better secure these weapons from the risk of diversion by strengthening national stockpile security and management.

The Security Council should continue to mandate peacekeeping missions to assist host countries in their management of arms stockpiles, as well as their disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts. States' stockpile management capacity should be taken into account when the Security Council considers the termination of an arms embargo.

Two years ago, the Security Council set an important milestone by adopting resolution 2117 (2013), the first-ever Council resolution to address the challenges posed by small arms. The resolution paved the way for an enhanced role by the Council in tackling this issue. We should continue in our united efforts to stem the scourge of illicit arms transfer and misuse that undermine our security, human rights and development goals.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Mr. Sauer (Finland): Let me first thank Lithuania for convening this important Security Council meeting.

Small arms and light weapons are the most frequently used weapons in armed conflicts today. They pose a continuous threat to international peace and security. Their uncontrolled and illicit proliferation cause significant loss of life and contribute to instability and insecurity. They also fuel conflicts and have various negative impacts on human rights, humanitarian law and development. The misuse of small arms and light weapons can also have a disproportionate impact on women and girls. These weapons also threaten stable post-conflict peace and security.

We have to be mindful that parties to armed conflict bear the primary responsibility to take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of civilians. Equally, States also bear the primary responsibility to respect and ensure the protection of the human rights of all individuals. Through its disarmament and arms control measures, the Security Council can make a valuable contribution to ensuring the protection of civilians.

Finland welcomes the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Small arms and light weapons" (S/2015/289). It outlines pressing issues that need to be tackled if we are to combat the challenges of misuse of small arms and light weapons. In addition, the findings of the high-level review of sanctions will provide useful guidance to the United Nations system and States for strengthening the effectiveness of arms embargoes.

Effective physical security and the management of stockpiles of small arms, light weapons and ammunition are crucial in order to prevent their illicit transfer and misuse. Finland is committed to continuing to support the efforts to prevent diversion and illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons through such mechanisms as the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation.

Finland wishes to highlight the links between different small arms processes and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The main objectives of the ATT are to regulate the international legal arms trade and reduce the illegal trade and diversion of small arms and light weapons. The ATT is also expected to strengthen the arms embargoes and sanctions regimes, enhance the performance of peacebuilding and peacekeeping operations and improve the protection of human rights and living conditions of men, women and children. We therefore need to work towards the universalization of the Treaty and assist States in effective national implementation, if needed.

The ATT includes the highest possible international standards for arms transfers we can agree on today. However, this does not exclude the possibility for agreeing on even higher standards tomorrow. Finland encourages all States that have not signed or acceded to the ATT to do so at their earliest convenience, with the aim of a more secure world for all of us and for future generations.

We encourage the Council to adopt the new small arms draft resolution under negotiation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): I would like to thank the Lithuanian presidency of the Security Council for convening this important debate and for preparing an excellent concept note (S/2015/306, annex). We also thank the Secretary-General for his biennial report on the issue (S/2015/289).

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union. I would now like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

In our view, the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons represents a grave threat to global and regional peace and security. We commend the Council's sustained attention on this matter. We hope that the Council will continue to build on the momentum achieved with the adoption of the resolution 2117 (2013) and, in that context, we warmly welcome the new draft resolution proposed by the presidency on this topic.

The issue of the control of small arms and light weapons (SALW) is of great importance. Our own conflict and post-conflict experience have made us aware of the grave threat posed by the excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons in both legal and illegal possession. For Croatia, the issue of SALW control is not merely one of safety; we see it in the wider context of human security, development and human rights. Over the years, Croatia has led the Less Arms, Less Tragedies campaign to raise awareness and collect arms, which is conducted jointly by the United Nations Development Programme Office in Croatia and our Ministry of Interior. The campaign is aimed at raising public awareness about the dangers of weapons, especially those illegally owned by citizens. It also seeks to inform people about ways to return weapons anonymously and without legal consequences, and thereby to encourage citizens to voluntarily surrender their weapons. The United Nations has rated this campaign as one of the most successful of its kind globally, based on the criteria of citizen participation and the final number of small arms and light weapons collected.

We believe that national efforts are of the utmost importance in tackling the issue of SALW. However, some problems cannot be dealt with by countries alone and need to be addressed at the regional and global levels. Croatia attaches great importance to regional cooperation in this field and strongly supports and participates in regional efforts. We have played an active, pioneering role in the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe. As a result of those efforts, our region has developed and implemented innovative solutions for tackling that issue through information-sharing, knowledge transfers and the harmonization of approaches.

A telling example of such regional cooperation is the Regional Arms Control Verification, Implementation and Assistance Centre for Security Cooperation, which is located in Zagreb and fully operational. Regional cooperation was crucial in achieving significant progress in reducing the number of unwanted and surplus light weapons and ammunition in the countries of South-East Europe. We believe that this success in our region can set a good example for other regions of the world.

At the global level, Croatia is a State party to all relevant existing mechanisms, including the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We recognize the ATT as a major milestone in controlling the use of conventional arms and small arms and light weapons, which cause the death of hundreds of thousands of people every year. Croatia was among the first countries to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty, thereby demonstrating our firm commitment to arms control in a wider context. We attach the highest priority to the Treaty's full implementation, both regionally and globally. Our experts, who have extensive national and regional experience in post-conflict arms control efforts, will actively participate in European Union outreach activities.

Croatia also attaches great importance to applying a gender perspective to the matter of small arms. The illicit transfer, misuse and accumulation of SALW can have a disproportionate effect on women and girls. We stress the role that women can and should play in peace processes. The political empowerment of women and their full, equal and effective participation in all stages of peace processes are crucial for building sustainable peace and security, ensuring gender equality and protecting human rights. Finally, Croatia would also like to recognize and welcome the role of civil society in dealing with that issue.

Every day we see the human costs of the widespread availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons. We therefore hope that today's debate will provide further impetus to our collective efforts to strengthen the fight against the illicit transfer, misuse and accumulation of small arms and light weapons.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Lupan (Moldova): Despite the fact that Moldova is a country affected by small arms and light weapons and has a frozen conflict on its territory, due to time limitations and the fact that my country has aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union, it is my honour to address the Council exclusively in my capacity as Chair-designate of the second Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts under the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which will take place from 1 to 5 June at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Taken together, the United Nations Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument constitute an important global framework that enables us to tackle the complex issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It is therefore heartening that the Security Council has continually recognized the significance of the United Nations Programme of Action during its debates on the issue, as well as in its presidential statements and its first resolution on small arms and light weapons adopted in 2013 (resolution 2117 (2013).

At the forthcoming Meeting of Governmental Experts under the Programme of Action, it is anticipated that States will focus on recent developments in small arms and light weapons technology. Recent trends in such technologies have important implications for how the issue of small arms and light weapons should be addressed in the future. Modular weapons now exist that can be fitted with different components, making their marking and tracing more complex. Weapons can now be printed using three-dimensional printing technology and, although its reliability is not yet high, it still can potentially lead to placing undetectable weapons in the wrong hands. Metals can increasingly be replaced by polymers, which can also hamper detection.

Such trends present new challenges and complicate efforts with respect to the tracing of illicit weapons. However, on the positive side, new technologies, such as biometric or radio frequency identification, could enhance stockpile management and capabilities in the marking, recordkeeping and tracing of weapons. A number of States have specifically indicated the need to discuss, at the second Open-ended Meeting, the outflow of small arms and light weapons into illegal circulation, including into the hands of terrorists, non-State actors or unrecognized entities. The need to ensure appropriate action and control by States over small arms and light weapons and their marking, transfer and tracing, as well as over brokering activities, inter alia, has also been identified.

Taking into account the fact that the focus of this year's second Open-ended Meeting is on recent trends in marking and tracing small arms and light weapons, the opportunity to discuss those and other related issues will allow us to thoroughly consider how we can ensure that the United Nations Programme of Action and its International Tracing Instrument stay up to date and to guarantee their continued full and effective implementation. The upcoming Meeting will also provide a platform for all States to discuss needs and good practices, which may feed into concrete results at the Programme of Action's review conference in 2018.

Resolution 2117 (2013) stresses the need to make real progress in preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Real progress is what we need in order to save lives from carnage and destruction and to ensure stable and sustainable development around the world, now and post-2015. There can be no development without security, without respect for international law and without respect for human lives. Real progress in preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is what all United Nations Member States must work together to achieve at every forum, including the Security Council and at the forthcoming second Meeting of Governmental Experts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Bird (Australia): As today's meeting has heard, the human cost of the illicit transfer, accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons is horrific and widespread. In conflict and other situations of armed violence, civilians consistently suffer the most. Civilians are deliberately targeted by rebel groups, terrorists, gangs and rogue Governments using these weapons. Women and girls suffer disproportionately. In post-conflict situations these weapons perpetuate a vicious cycle of insecurity and violence, which undermines reconciliation, investment and development.

Given the importance and the complexity of this issue, we need an international response that is comprehensive, coordinated and collaborative. Within the United Nations, the Security Council could do more by designing and monitoring peacekeeping and special political mission mandates to address small arms challenges, including by making better use of police components. The Council's mandates should integrate arms embargo implementation, stockpile security, surplus disposal, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and security sector reform. The participation of women should be addressed across all of these components.

As a practical example, arms embargo cells — such as that in the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire — and the active use of the International Small Arms Control Standards play a useful role in improving coordination. The Council can also take concrete steps to improve the effectiveness of its arms embargoes.

First, the Council should consistently mandate sanctions expert groups to investigate and collect information on arms-trafficking routes, patterns and key players in the arms trade. Expert groups need the cooperation of all United Nations agencies and all States.

Secondly, the Sanctions Committees must be mandated and should act quickly to designate arms traffickers and their facilitators.

Thirdly, the United Nations system should be better positioned to mobilize capacity-building for the host Government, as well as neighbouring States, to stop arms and ammunition from reaching the conflict. Targeted travel and financial sanctions can play an important role in implementing arms embargoes. The final report of the high-level review of sanctions will be published soon. We expect that it will provide useful guidance to the United Nations system and States in order to strengthen the effectiveness of arms embargoes.

All States have a responsibility to prevent arms transfers to illicit users, abide by arms embargoes, strengthen legislation, and improve cooperation among law enforcement agencies, including through regional and international organizations such as INTERPOL.

As resolution 2117 (2013) makes clear, the misuse of small arms and light weapons has resulted in the commission of serious international crimes. The responsible and transparent regulation of the international trade in conventional arms is essential to meeting our shared responsibility to protect populations from the most devastating international crimes, including mass atrocities. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) will help us meet this shared responsibility, and we urge States that have not already done so to ratify or accede to the Treaty.

Finally, we call on the Council to regularly review the implementation of resolution 2117 (2013) and the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/289). We need vigilance and momentum if we are to alleviate the heavy toll of human suffering caused by small arms.

The President: I give the floor now to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Laassel (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to congratulate Lithuania on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and welcome the timely choice of the topic for this debate. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/289) and for the recommendations contained therein.

The concept note (S/2015/306, annex) prepared by the Lithuanian presidency raises a number of questions that prompt in-depth consideration of the trafficking of small arms and their nefarious impact on the peace and security of States. We hope that today's debate will provide a concrete follow-up to the high-level debate organized by the Australian presidency in September 2013 (see S/PV.7036), which resulted in the adoption of resolution 2117 (2013).

There is global consensus on the destructive effects of the proliferation and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons. This scourge is the greatest cause of the loss of human lives, the destruction of economic capacities, and the threat to the security, stability and national unity of States, as well as their territorial integrity. The illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons prolongs conflict, exacerbates armed violence, and weakens respect for international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Furthermore, the close connection between terrorism, transnational organized crime, and the traffic in drugs, human beings and natural resources is overwhelmingly clear.

The African continent has unfortunately been the most heavily hit by the horrors resulting from this evil. In this respect, the Sahel-Saharan region has become the epicentre of the recent association among illicit arms trafficking, terrorist and separatist groups, and criminal networks. At the same time, threats related to security, the scope of which exceeds the Sahel region, have been exacerbated by the circulation of weapons, whose number has grown in recent years, in particular those from the arsenals of the former Libyan regime of Al-Qadhafi. Those weapons contribute significantly to the destabilization of the region by empowering terrorist and criminal groups operating in the Sahelo-Saharan region.

Therefore, in order to end this scourge, it is essential to promote international and subregional multidimensional cooperation aimed at strengthening the capacities of States, in particular in intelligence gathering and border protection. In this framework, I recall the high-level meeting on the counter-terrorism strategy in the Sahel region, organized by the Secretary-General, and the special meeting organized by the Counter-Terrorism Committee, under the chairmanship of Morocco, on cooperation and assistance to countries in the Sahel region, with a view to strengthening their counter-terrorism capacities.

International consensus is being built on the need to strengthen global coordination mechanisms to ensure an effective struggle against the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons and to seek the best ways to addressing the resulting challenges. To that end, the Kingdom of Morocco emphasizes the extreme importance of the the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

The Kingdom of Morocco also reiterates its support for the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and and its International Tracing Instrument. Morocco calls for their effective implementation at the international, regional and national levels, based on the Action Plan adopted at the second United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action. Furthermore, Morocco hopes that the Arms Trade Treaty, which entered into force in December 2014, will continue to strengthen international efforts to end the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons.

To that end, in 2006 the Kingdom of Morocco signed the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. Morocco participated in its launch alongside Switzerland and 41 other States members of the United Nations Development Programme and non-governmental organizations active in the field of development. This initiative, now backed by 109 signatory States, is focused on helping countries affected by armed violence in order to eliminate this scourge and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by integrating disarmament, demobilization and reintegration into their national development policies.

We further recall that international efforts to fight the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons must comply with the provisions of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including the right of all States to import and manufacture small arms and light weapons for their legitimate national defence needs and to maintain their territorial integrity.

Finally, Morocco hopes that this meeting will lend new momentum to regional and subregional cooperation in order to prevent illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and to prevent the merchants of death from profiting at the expense of innocent victims. We underscore the importance of information-exchange and intelligence mechanisms and the need to step up cooperation and international assistance, particularly in capacity-building, which are extremely important to the effective implementation of the Programme of Action and all international commitments.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): Let me start by thanking Lithuania for taking the initiative to organize this very important open debate and also for the excellent concept note that has been circulated (S/2015/306, annex). It provides valuable guidance for our debate today.

In the view of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the availability and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons constitutes a threat to peace, justice and development in many regions around the world. Therefore, the Kingdom of the Netherlands welcomes this open debate and would like to encourage the Council to adopt the draft resolution that is under consideration.

We align ourselves with the statement made earlier on behalf of the European Union. In view of time constraints, I will limit myself to a shortened version of this speech. The full text will be available on Twitter. I would like to make three points concerning the human cost, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), and the need for a comprehensive approach.

First, we all know that the human cost of the illicit trade, accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons is tremendous. Small arms and light weapons are the most deadly weapons worldwide. They are truly a global public ill. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons increases the risk that both smaller and larger conflicts will give rise to mass atrocities. The misuse of these weapons results in grave crimes and thereby poses a threat to international peace and security. We see a direct link with the protection of civilians in armed conflict and the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Secondly, let me stress the great importance of the ATT. Its entry into force in December 2014 was a great step forward, especially its obligation for the States party to the Treaty to set up export control systems. The inclusion of ammunition in the Treaty, of course, was vital, as it enables the weapons to be used. We are proud to have been an active participant in the drafting of the Treaty. The current challenge is to effectively implement the ATT and work towards its universalization. We call on all States Members of the United Nations to ratify the Treaty, as well as on the current signatories and States parties to the Treaty to make the first conference of State parties in Mexico City a success. Together we must implement the ATT.

My third point is on the need for a comprehensive approach to address small arms and light weapons issues. Such a comprehensive approach is of the utmost importance, as the effects of illegal small arms and light weapons touch on many different policy areas. The availability and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons feed political instability and conflicts. They threaten the conditions for social, economic and human development, and the presence of large quantities of such weapons in societies, especially in fragile States and under-governed areas, causes social tensions and fuels violence.

Therefore, in our view, small arms and light weapons issues should be approached in a comprehensive, integrated manner, addressing good governance, strengthening the rule of law and providing alternative livelihood initiatives. This issue should also be part of broader security programs, such as security sector reform, as well as United Nations peace operations. As our Moroccan colleague, who preceded me, also mentioned, we see a direct link with anti-terrorism efforts. We pay tribute here to the cooperation the Kingdom of the Netherlands enjoys with the Kingdom of Morocco on anti-terrorism efforts. Together we are going to chair the Global Counter-terrorism Forum.

In conclusion, in 2001 Secretary-General Koffi Annan stated the following while addressing the Security Council:

> "Small arms are easy to buy, easy to use, easy to transport and easy to conceal. Their proliferation exacerbates conflict, sparks refugee flows, undermines the rule of law and spawns a culture of violence and impunity. This is not just a question of disarmament; it is also an issue of development, democracy, human rights and human security." (*S/PV.4355, p. 4*).

Let those words serve as a rallying point for action on our behalf. For our part, the Kingdom of the Netherlands looks forward to continued work with our partners for peace, justice and development. Together, let us end the devastating effects of the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons for peoples and societies worldwide.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Samvelian (Armenia): Armenia thanks the Lithuanian presidency of the Security Council for initiating this open debate, and the Secretary-General for his briefing and recent comprehensive report on the subject matter dated 27 April 2015 (S/2015/289). We also thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for his detailed overview.

The excessive accumulation, uncontrolled spread and illicit trafficking of small arms in all its aspects pose a serious threat to peace and undermines efforts to ensure an indivisible and comprehensive security. In that vein, Armenia remains committed to the full and effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which outlines a number of important steps including measures pertaining to regional cooperation. We are convinced that the further development of regional and subregional small arms control mechanisms, with the participation of all stakeholders and interested parties on a status-neutral basis, could promote better control of small arms and light weapons (SALW).

Armenia also acknowledges the important contributions made by civil society to the implementation of the Programme of Action, and encourages cooperation with a broader participation of civil society in that process. We support the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) initiatives aimed at promoting the implementation of SALW-related commitments. Armenia submits information on international SALW transfers to the United Nations Office for Disarmament

Affairs and to the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre annually.

It is noteworthy that last year OSCE adopted a decision on voluntary guidelines for compiling national reports on SALW exports. We believe that such a voluntary guide could also be useful to other United Nations Member States in their efforts to implement international agreements on SALW. We are of the opinion that a standardized reporting form may encourage greater transparency on SALW exports and imports, especially in our region. Dialogue and goal-oriented cooperation among international organizations are essential to better address the issue while avoiding the duplication of activities.

When SALW fall into the wrong hands, they exacerbate violence, prolongs conflicts, undermine the security of States, increase the activities of transnational organized crime, and allow for terrorism. They affect all levels of society, economically and socially, causing a great degree of human suffering. Therefore, combating the threat of the uncontrolled and illicit spread of SALW is crucial in order to strengthen transparency in military matters and build a climate of trust and confidence between all stakeholders, particularly in the regions where the threat perception is real.

It is also important to take necessary steps to prevent the export of SALW to countries where there is a clear risk that force might be used for the violation or suppression of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including that of the right to self-determination. In that regard, Member States should ensure that they have adopted relevant laws, regulations and/or necessary administrative procedures to exercise control over the legal possessions of SALW and their transfer in order to prevent illicit trafficking.

At the international level, Armenia continues to support efforts aimed at the regulation of SALW-related matters. In that regard, we stress the importance of financial and technical assistance in building the capacity of Member States to implement such controls. We are pleased to inform the Council that, jointly with the United Nations and the OSCE, a round table on the implementation of SALW commitments, which was aimed at supporting Armenia in the elaboration of a national strategy on SALW control, was organized in October last year in Yerevan. The United Nations-OSCE team of experts recently presented recommendations based on the results of the discussions.

We are currently working on the organizational modalities of the second round table, entitled Effective Stockpile Management and Security, and Destruction of SALW and Conventional Ammunition, which will be held in Yerevan in July with the participation of relevant stakeholders including the Ministry of Defence, the police, national security service, and International Criminal Police Organization National Central Bureau. The purpose of the round table is to raise awareness of the international commitments, examine best practices related to stockpile management and security, the destruction of SALW and conventional ammunition, as well as, where appropriate, to consider the review of national procedures on handling SALW and conventional ammunition.

In conclusion, we are confident that the Security Council will continue to pay particular attention to SALW-related issues.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Ms. Bila (Ukraine): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this important and timely open debate, which we believe will make a valuable contribution in addressing the issue of the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW).

Ukraine aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union earlier today. However, we would like to make some additional comments in our national capacity.

While Ukraine recognizes that weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their proliferation is a real threat to humankind as a whole in 2015, we must admit that the possibility of the use of WMDs depends on a number of factors. In that regard, SALW also have a powerful virulent effect. In particular, the instability caused by the proliferation of SALW and their use could serve as a real precondition to a nuclear conflict. Therefore, today we must tackle the issue of the illicit transfer, stockpiling and misuse of SALW with the utmost responsibility.

In that respect, we welcome the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), in December 2014, which includes SALW in its scope, contains provisions on the stockpiling of ammunition and further raises the level of attention and scrutiny given to controls of SALW. Ukraine was among the sponsors of the General Assembly resolutions on the ATT and signed the document in 2014. The harmonization of its provisions with the national legislation of signatory countries would be an important step in reaching the ATT objectives, particularly in preventing and eradicating the illicit trade in conventional arms and preventing their diversion. However, until the key arms-exporting States become signatories to the Treaty, we can not speak about the comprehensive nature of the ATT. We therefore call upon all the States to become a part of this important process.

The human cost of illicit SALW proliferation is extremely perturbing. It is not a secret that in my country SALW-related challenges emerged mostly after the Russian aggression against Ukraine undertaken in 2014 and 2015. But the first steps in that regard were made earlier. Long before the occupation started, the Russian Federation made numerous supplies of arms, including SALW, into the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. It is clear that those weapons showed up during the so-called referendum in Crimea in 2014. As a result, since then this part of Ukraine is occupied by the Russian Federation.

During 2014 and 2015, the illegal pro-Russian armed groups — the so-called Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic — in close coordination with Russian troops, have gained and continue to control those respective segments of the Russian-Ukrainian border. In that way, a deadly route for the illicit transfers of SALW to the territory Ukraine has been opened. The continuous flows of sophisticated weapons and ammunition from the Russian Federation to Crimea and the eastern part of Ukraine have had a disastrous and destabilizing effect. The most cynical thing in that regard is that large amounts of SALW are moved to the Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine from Russian territory under the guise of the so-called humanitarian convoys. These problems have been regularly reported to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. Numerous items of documentary evidence have been presented to the members of the Mission.

Without delving into the technical details, I would like to draw the Council's attention to one example of the evidence of weaponry supplies through the Ukrainian-Russian border segment. A week ago, during the neutralization of a subversive group in the Donetsk region, a model 34 under-barrel grenade launcher (UBGL-34), which is in the inventory of Russian army, was confiscated. It is easy to verify that the UBGL-34 model is not in the inventory of the Ukrainian armed forces. We have many similar examples with relevant documentation and photos. The UBGL-34 and other SALW have a strong destabilizing effect in the heart of Europe, killing hundreds of peaceful Ukrainians. The conclusion is the following: we have no right to be blind with regard to the illicit supplies of conventional weapons, including SALW, from the Russian Federation to Ukraine.

In the wider context, after the brutal occupation of Crimea by Russian military forces with the use, or threat of use, of conventional weapons, including SALW, we heard statements by Russian officials about their right to deploy nuclear weapons on the Crimean Peninsula. Such acts would constitute a direct security threat, both at the regional and global level. We should keep an eye on every such action.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Estreme (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to congratulate your delegation, Madam, on your assumption of the Security Council presidency for the month of May. I also appreciate the convening of this open debate.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons as a result of the illicit trade and irresponsible transfers presents an enormous challenge to international peace and security. Argentina believes that the international community is duty-bound and has an inexorable responsibility to step up efforts in order to eradicate this proliferation through greater control and transparency in the stockpiling of weapons and by strengthening international cooperation through the exchange of information, the establishment of confidence-building measures and cooperation in order to strengthen the capacities of States to establish effective arms control and regulatory measures.

We know that throughout the world violent actions in conflict and post-conflict situations is carried out, for the most part, with conventional weapons, in particular with small arms and light weapons, which allow those who use them to drastically increase their ability to project power. In those situations, the proliferation of weapons has a devastating impact on civilians, especially on women and children. In conflict zones, the constant flow of weapons and ammunition exacerbate violence, they generate flows of refugees and prolong the duration of hostilities.

In addition, the stockpiling and proliferation of small arms and light weapons have severe implications for human development, sustainable economic growth and peace, because they tear the social fabric of communities, divert investment away from infrastructure, health and education, foster legal insecurity, increase crime and generate a climate of political instability and impunity. That is why small arms and light weapons are both a symptom of insecurity and a factor that fuels that insecurity.

The excellent concept note (S/2015/306, annex), Madam President, that your delegation drafted to guide our statements during this debate notes that there are approximately 900 million small arms in circulation around the world. Of those weapons, a major part are accounted for by illicit trade, a very lucrative business that makes it possible, through the diversion of weapons, for terrorist groups, rebels, pirates and other criminal organizations to gain the capacity to exponentially multiply their power.

That is why Argentina considers it a priority to strengthen the existing mechanisms to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, such as the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The premise on which we base our position is that the fight against the proliferation of, and the illicit trafficking in, weapons depends as much on the policies that countries are willing to adopt domestically, as on the periodic review of the measures on export control and the regulation and adequate controls at the regional and international levels.

In that context, the effective implementation of the sanctions imposed by the Council is essential. The sanctions are not an end in themselves, but their strict compliance by all Member States, in particular countries that produce and export weapons, is an essential factor to reduce the availability of weapons in conflict zones.

As the Secretary-General recognizes in his report,

> "If the weapons situation is not consistently dealt with, exacerbation or relapse into renewed fighting remains a paramount risk" (*S/2015/289, summary*).

A common denominator of all situations considered by the Security Council is that the availability, ownership and use of arms and ammunitions determine to a large extent the dynamics of a crisis. A significant share of small arms and light weapons available in conflict zones do not come from illicit trade, but are rather the result of legitimate transfers to countries in conflict or to places where they could be used to commit violations of international humanitarian law or of human rights.

Each authorized transfer of arms implies a huge responsibility at the international level. That is why the entry into force in December 2014 of the Arms Trade Treaty, which covers small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, will provide an essential additional tool to reduce the availability of arms in areas of conflict. States will have an obligation to evaluate the impact of each transfer prior to authorizing it. Just as the Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross reminded us when the Council considered the same topic in September 2013 (see S/PV.7036), at three of the International Conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent held in the past 10 years, the States parties to the Geneva Convention of 1949 acknowledged their obligation to uphold international humanitarian law and to adopt appropriate measures to control the availability of weapons. Both those obligations remind us that it is easier to avoid the flow of weapons to conflict areas rather than to try to remedy the devastating consequences of their irresponsible transfer and illicit trafficking.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Madam President, on the assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of May and to thank you for convening this important meeting to discuss a topic that is of great concern to the international community.

Today, the international community clearly views the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW) as a challenge that continues to sustain conflict and to fuel terrorism, extremism and illegal non-State armed groups, and to aid in human trafficking and the trafficking of drugs. In that regard, I take this opportunity to highlight the multiple dangers associated with the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons to terrorist and extremist groups, especially those operating in the Middle East and Africa.

We have all seen the gruesome effects of the groups' activities in our region. In Egypt, we are engaged in large-scale counter-terrorism operations in the northern Sinai peninsula against terrorist groups associated with Daesh, Al-Qaida and others. In Syria, extremist and terrorist groups have taken large swathes of the country, and the same has occurred in Iraq and Libya. In Yemen, non-State actors, in defiance of the international community, have obstructed the political transition there by taking over cities and State institutions. In Africa, we have seen increasingly bloody and gruesome attacks by groups such as Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al-Shabaab in Kenya and Somalia.

While the illicit trade in SALW is not the only reason behind those terrorist activities, there is no doubt that illicit trade has also been a massive enabling factor contributing to the intensity of terrorist activities, to the human and security costs to the affected countries, and to the many destabilizing effects on international peace and security. It is vital that the international community undertake robust efforts to deal with the threat of terrorism and the illicit proliferation of SALW through, inter alia, the following measures.

First, there must be strict implementation of all relevant Security Council sanctions aimed at combating terrorism and preventing extremist and terrorist groups and non-State actors from acquiring arms, including SALW. In that regard, I emphasize the particular importance of the implementation of resolutions 2214 (2015) regarding Libya and 2216 (2015) regarding Yemen.

Secondly, attention should be given to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects. Egypt is fully committed to the effective implementation of the Programme of Action, which we believe is the only universal reference in that regard. Egypt has consistently played an active role in furthering the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action, including through assuming the role of facilitator for the review, in two cycles, of the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument.

Thirdly, we must consider increasing international support to the States most affected by both terrorism and the illicit trade of SALW. In that regard, it is important to highlight that development efforts and combatting the illicit proliferation of SALW go hand in hand. Investment in development, post-conflict rehabilitation, capacity-building and the establishment of strong State institutions are all vital factors in combating the spread of illicit SALW. Furthermore, we believe that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes should be an important element in United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions, especially in post-conflict environments. That is vital to ensuring that SALW in those areas do not contribute to conflict relapse, and to preventing their transfer to other States, potentially fuelling conflict elsewhere. Such assistance should include the transfer of technology and the provision of equipment under preferential and concessional terms as an effective means to enhance the capability of developing countries in combating the illicit trade in SALW. The upcoming meetings of the Group of Experts of the Programme next month, in June, will provide an exceptional opportunity to develop concrete proposals in support of developing countries.

Fourthly, we must provide support to Governments engaged in the fight against terrorism and the illicit trade in SALW. Governments remain the first line of defence against those two closely related threats. Hence, the international community must never allow the Government of a State facing those severe threats to be in a position of disadvantage vis-à-vis terrorist and criminal adversaries.

In conclusion, the threat posed by the illicit transfer of SALW requires concerted action by the international community, building on existing frameworks, such as the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Programme of Action, consistent with international law and in accordance with our common responsibility to combat terrorism, extremism and criminal activities in all their shapes and forms.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Mr. Milanović (Serbia): First, allow me to thank you, Madam President, for convening this very important meeting.

My country aligns itself with the statement delivered by observer of the European Union (EU). I would like, however, to take this opportunity to inform the Council briefly about some of Serbia's activities in the field of preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW) in all its aspects.

Serbia is a State party to major international instruments in this field, including the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the Firearms Protocol and the

International Tracing Instrument. It has also adopted the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, as well as OSCE decisions in this area, notably on the storage of conventional arms, standard elements of end-user certificates, verification procedures and brokering control. Serbia also signed and ratified the Arms Trade Treaty and has taken extensive legislative, regulatory and practical measures at the national level for the implementation of the obligations it has assumed.

In May 2010, the Government of Serbia adopted its national strategy on the control of small arms and light weapons for the period 2010-2015. The strategy, a major accomplishment of the Serbian institutions in their efforts to formulate a holistic approach towards SALW control on the basis of the best international practices, provides a framework for the activities of relevant governmental and non-governmental actors to prevent and combat the unlawful production, possession and trade in SALW. Its overall goal is to establish a national system of effective control of SALW, thereby ensuring the reduction of weapons in illegal possession as well as the number of abuses of legal weapons.

The Strategy has also provided a basis for setting up a council for SALW as an ad hoc working body headed by the SALW National Coordinator and comprised of the representatives of the competent governmental institutions with the relevant professional knowledge in the field. The Council, established in December 2011, was mandated to propose measures for the implementation and coordination of the Strategy. It developed an action plan for the implementation of the Strategy on SALW control, which was adopted by the Government in 2013. The action plan regulates the coordination of the activities and allocation of necessary resources, ensures the harmonization of national legislation with United Nations, OSCE and EU regulations and standards, coordinates the work of the relevant agencies in preparing reports under Serbia's international obligations, submits periodic reports to the Government on the progress made in the fulfilment of the objectives of the strategy and the action plan and initiates and contributes to the establishment of a unique national SALW tracing database.

As for arms exports control, all the criteria of the EU code of conduct are incorporated in Serbia's new law on the export and import of arms and military equipment. Adopted by the Serbian National Assembly in October 2014, the law is fully in line with the relevant EU and OSCE standards and, together with enhanced border and customs control measures, plays a pivotal role in strengthening surveillance and combating the illicit arms trade. It is also an indispensable instrument for preventing the destabilizing accumulation of SALW and reducing the ability of unauthorized non-State actors to acquire exported arms illegally.

On 24 February, the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia adopted a new law on arms and ammunition. Fully harmonized with EU rules and regulations, the law entered into force on 4 March and its implementation — except for article 51, providing for arms legalization — is expected to begin on 4 March 2016. Currently, a campaign is under way in Serbia to legalize arms and ammunition. Begun on 4 March, it will last until 4 June. According to the data of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia, 2,251 pieces of weapons were diverted from illegal to legal flows in the first 2 months ending on 4 May.

My country attaches great importance to the Programme of Action and remains strongly committed to its full implementation. In addition to the necessary political will, effective implementation of the Programme of Action requires appropriate capacities. Bearing that in mind, Serbia recognizes the important role of international cooperation and assistance in the area of capacity-building. There is no doubt that the sharing of relevant information, national experiences and lessons learned, as well as appropriate international financial, expert and technical assistance, can vitally contribute to the consolidation and strengthening of institutional capacities and practices for the suppression and eradication of the illicit trade in SALW.

International, regional and subregional organizations and civil society can make a significant contribution in that regard as well, for example, through developing model legislation, practical guidelines and coherent regional implementation standards, assisting States in assessing their needs or conducting training, regional meetings and similar activities. In that context, let me mention that the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of the Small Arms and Light Weapons, the regional organization mandated by the United Nations Development Programme and the Regional Cooperation Council, is headquartered in Belgrade.

Although we have witnessed some important developments in this field, much remains to be done if we are to address the challenges we face in a comprehensive and effective way. It is Serbia's strong conviction that international cooperation is the key to achieving progress in resolving the issues of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Occurring in all parts of the globe, it sparks and fuels armed conflicts, violence and organized crime, causing death to civilians and hindering rebuilding and development.

Serbia supports the activities conducted by the United Nations in this field and uses its current OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office to highlight the importance of the issue. It will intensify its efforts at national, regional and international levels and stands ready to further engage in all initiatives aimed at preventing and stopping this plague of the modern-day world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Bamrungphong (Thailand): First of all, allow me to join others in congratulating you, Madam President, and Lithuania, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would like to also express my appreciation for the thoughtful presentations and briefings this morning.

Thailand shares the concern that the illicit trade and transfer, proliferation, trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons pose a serious threat to peace, security stability and development. It is both a cause and a catalyst of violence and crime, resulting in countless deaths and injuries among civilians and entailing devastating humanitarian and socioeconomic costs, more than any other type of weapon. It is therefore in the interests of all parties to address the matter in a more concrete and collective manner.

Thailand welcomes the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/289) and its recommendations. Allow me to address some of the key important points in that respect.

First, our particular concern lies in the fact that women and children often disproportionately fall victims in situations of armed conflict as well as in post-conflict settings. To address that problem, gender-sensitive data must always be taken into consideration in both geographical and thematic issues on the Council's agenda, especially in the framework of the protection of civilians, which is one of its core mandates.

At the same time, women must be encouraged and allowed to participate fully in planning and implementing measures to combat the illicit trade, transfer and misuse of small arms and light weapons. In particular, the role of women should be recognized as change agents and conciliators, in line with the women and peace and security agenda.

Secondly, given the multifaceted nature of the causes and adverse consequences of small arms and light weapons, we need to strengthen collaboration and coordination under the various multilateral frameworks aimed at curbing the proliferation of small arms and promoting responsible actions by States in order to help in preventing the spread of those illicit weapons.

Thailand is pleased with the increased efforts on the part of the international community towards tackling the issue over the past few years, such as the discussion within the scope of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the adoption of resolution 2117 (2013), the first stand-alone Council resolution that addresses the question of small arms and light weapons.

The entry into force of the ATT, in December last year, will undoubtedly reinforce the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in tackling that challenge more efficiently, in particular by increasing transparency of the trade in small arms and the submission of ATT State parties' annual reports.

The Treaty's universalization and full implementation are key to its success. Thailand signed the ATT and is undertaking the necessary domestic procedures to ratify the Treaty in the near future. However, measures in the ATT and the Programme of Action should complement each other. Duplication of work and the imposition of unnecessary burdens on small States that are neither major arms producers nor importers should be avoided.

Thirdly, apart from preventing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, civilian firearms should also be strictly regulated, both through the registration process and with regard to transfers, for the purpose of effective control and tracing, as those weapons also exacerbate violence and crime at community level.

Fourthly, a people-centred approach should be the core principle of any attempt to address the challenge related to small arms and light weapons. Awareness regarding the serious nature and urgency of the matter should be raised among the public and civil society.

Fifthly, Thailand is heartened by the scientific research and inventions of new technologies that have led to new possibilities in regulating and tracing the use of small arms and light weapons. It is our hope that such technologies will be applied to the manufacturing of all small arms as widely as possible so as to decrease the adverse consequences that we know too well.

Sixthly, my last point is that it is important for countries to have effective mechanisms to enable the full implementation of their obligations. Each country needs to strive to exercise effective control over the transfer of such weapons. However, certain challenges remain. New possibilities of illicit arms trade routes, such as trafficking through maritime transportation, have emerged. Therefore, information-sharing among the authorities concerned and capacity-building measures remain instrumental in cross-border control and improved implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and other multilateral instruments.

Thailand realizes the importance of capacity-building for experts, and we would like to emphasize the important role the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament can play in strengthening capacity through regional or country training programmes customized for the specific needs of each region and country.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Montenegro.

Mr. Ivezaj (Montenegro): We thank you, Madam President, for convening today's debate on the human cost of the illicit transfer and destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. We commend Lithuania's strong commitment to the issue, as well as the outstanding concept note (S/2015/306, annex). We also thank today's briefers for their valuable presentations.

Montenegro aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the observer of the European Union. However, I would like to highlight some points of particular importance to my country.

Today, we are all aware of the agonizing impact of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW). The uncontrolled availability of small arms and their illicit trafficking exact an alarming cost from each of the three main pillars of the United Nations — peace, development and human rights. They pose a serious threat to peace and reconciliation processes and lead to a vast range of human rights violations. They will also undermine our work to achieve sustainable development and realize the new set of sustainable development goals.

Over the past decades, the efforts of the international community to prevent and reduce violent conflict have increased and been strengthened. However, for many countries, conflicts and instability remain intractable problems, fuelled by the unregulated and irresponsible trade in SALW. We believe that steps taken to tackle the problem of small arms and light weapons must be practical, effective and comprehensive. This is essential in order to reduce the devastating and long-lasting impact of the widespread availability and misuse of SALW. The most effective way to prevent their misuse is through imposing strict import and export controls, enacting strong brokering laws and, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary General (S/2015/289), urgently addressing stockpile security and management.

Peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding missions also play a role in addressing this challenge. They can contribute by providing assistance with stockpile management and with the collection and destruction of weapons. The adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) last year is a step in the right direction that will help prevent destabilizing arms flows to conflict areas and to illicit users. It shows how much we can achieve if we work together. The Arms Trade Treaty will complement and strengthen a number of existing international instruments, with its ability to adapt.

Montenegro is proud to have ratified the ATT in August 2014, thus being in the group of the first 50 countries to do so. That, in turn, made possible the entry into force of the ATT in December of that year. Our ratification is yet another illustration of my country's firm commitment to the ATT and to promoting responsible arms trading throughout the world. Now that the ATT has entered into force, we expect the instrument to be decisive in putting an end to an uncontrolled arms trade that fuels armed conflicts, with its ability to change the lives of the most affected people. Montenegro will be devoted to the full and effective implementation of the ATT as well as to upholding the principles and standards enshrined by the Treaty on a global scale. Our efforts will continue in order to ensure that the Treaty truly becomes universal, with as broad and effective application as possible.

Each year, over half a million men, women and children die as a result of armed violence and easy access to portable weapons, too often used by children. Civilians suffer the most, particularly the poor. It is encouraging that national legislation has improved in a number of countries, although there is much work ahead, since many States lack the capacity to exercise effective control over small arms and light weapons and to stem the flow of illicit weapons across their borders.

Montenegro has developed a solid legislative framework regarding small arms and light weapons, in line with European Union standards and supported by the relevant strategic documents. It has done so with a view to ensuring full compliance with international obligations and commitments, in particular restrictive measures and mechanisms adopted by the Security Council and the European Union, as well as the human rights situation in the country concerned. It is the best way to stop weapons falling into the wrong hands across the world, as a sustained process that requires the commitment of all of us. We stand ready to work closely with the international community and forge a global partnership to prevent the future misuse of SALW by developing common standards for arms transfer control.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Benin.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your country's accession to the presidency of the Security Council for this month and, at the same time, to express my gratitude for inviting me to take part in the debate on the human cost of the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, a topic that is of paramount importance to my country, Benin.

My delegation welcomes the maintenance of the small arms issue on the agenda of the Council. Like the Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, the theme of today's debate will increase international public awareness of the devastating consequences of the accumulation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons, as well as of the urgent need to work in a coordinated and integrated manner to end them.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/289), of which my delegation has taken note. I would also like to express my great appreciation to Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, for his contribution to the debate, and to welcome Mr. Karamoko Diakité, President of the Côte d'Ivoire chapter of the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms.

Trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Africa in general, and in the West Africa subregion in particular, constitutes a major challenge to peace and security. Such an uncontrolled epidemic carries a significant human cost. Some 90 per cent of victims of the hundreds of millions of light weapons and small arms circulating in West Africa consist of able-bodied people, women and children, all of whom indisputably constitute human factors of development.

According to data collected by the UNICEF, the use of small arms and light weapons in conflicts maims and traumatizes whole generations of children, both physically and psychologically. Long after peace agreements are concluded, the number of small arms and light weapons that remain in post-conflict societies helps perpetuate a culture of violence. Some veterans also consider their weapon a means of economic survival. Women and children are exposed to the dangers of those weapons, sometimes even within their households, creating a vicious cycle of crime and violence.

According to recent studies, over half a billion small arms are in circulation worldwide, and 1 in 12 people carries a generally inexpensive light weapon. Research has shown that in some places around the world, an AK-47 or Kalashnikov assault rifle costs less than a bag of corn or rice, facilitating their acquisition by criminal networks and drug traffickers and thus fomenting internal conflicts, crime, violence, assaults of all kinds, burglaries, robberies and rapes.

The international community must intensify efforts to stem the flow of weapons and destroy illicit stocks. In that regard, I welcome the mechanisms and ongoing programmes aimed at developing national, subregional and regional expertise and capacity in order to limit the availability of such weapons and to improve transfer controls. The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the International Tracing Instrument, the Firearms Protocol and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms are essential tools for enhancing regional and international security, which have recently been strengthened by the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty. We welcome its entry into force.

A major challenge in the immediate future will be establishing a system designed to harmonize the Arms Trade Treaty with various projects and programmes relating to existing mechanisms, particularly the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. The reality is that very few States in West Africa, including Benin, have mastered what the Tracing Instrument involves, including weapons tracing techniques, not to mention simply maintaining the registry. We should focus more on active cooperation and effective help with building national capacity and competence in using the International Tracing Instrument, the Programme of Action and the Arms Trade Treaty. To achieve that, our view is that the various forthcoming international conferences, such as the second Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts, the Biennial Meeting of States to Consider Implementation of the Programme of Action and the first Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, should be utilized to make a comprehensive assessment of current international approaches on small arms and light weapons.

There should be special emphasis on cooperation and assistance to developing countries in the areas of registration, keeping records of weapons and ammunition, border control, arms and ammunition transfers, tracing techniques and stockpile management, since ineffective and poor management are at the heart of the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In Benin's view, given the scale, impact and devastating human cost of this phenomenon, only a global approach founded on the shared responsibility of importers, exporters and arms manufacturers, supported by international cooperation and assistance and effective exchanges of information, will enable us to put an end to the problem and respond decisively while respecting the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Mr. Donoghue (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union. I would also like to make the following statement in my national capacity.

Ireland heartily welcomes the opportunity to debate in this forum the question of the human cost of the illicit transfer, accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. We would like to thank the Lithuanian presidency of the Security Council for giving us the opportunity to discuss the significant concerns about human security raised by the issue.

We were pleased to welcome the adoption the year before last of resolution 2117 (2013), which we saw as a very encouraging step on the road to combating the scourge of the illegal proliferation and accumulation of small arms and light weapons. We also welcomed the adoption of the consensus outcome document of the fifth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

As the concept note (S/2015/306, annex) clearly sets out, in our world the majority of deaths in conflict are caused by the use of small arms. More human-rights abuses are committed with small arms than any other weapon, and armed insecurity is one of the major impediments to development everywhere. Ireland therefore strongly supports the measures set out in resolution 2117 (2013), in particular the integrated approach to tackling the significant problems posed by the illicit accumulation and proliferation of such weapons. An integrated approach is essential if the international community is to adequately address the challenges posed by these weapons — whose contribution to conflict, post-conflict violence and gender-based violence is rightly acknowledged in the concept note — as well as the dangers they pose for humanitarian and peacekeeping interventions. Ireland therefore welcomes the inclusion of issues related to small arms and light weapons when peacekeeping mandates are under consideration. We strongly support current projects and efforts to make arms embargoes more effective, including through the development of international tracing procedures. We firmly believe that ammunition must also be included in the international community's control systems for such weapons. We look forward to the second Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts, to be held next month, and to further consideration of practical control measures in respect to these weapons.

Ireland recognizes that women continue to be a powerful force for change in relation to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms-control affairs, and we welcome the renewed focus on women's empowerment and the gender impact of illicit arms proliferation that today's debate has highlighted. We are pleased that the global study of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), currently under way, will also address the impact of small arms on women affected by conflict, and we look forward to exchanging views with the lead author of the study on those and other points soon.

Resolution 2117 (2013) is an important instrument for improving recognition of the inter-relationship between the misuse of small arms and light weapons, the issue of women and peace and security, and human-rights questions. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which entered into force on 24 December, has also been ground-breaking in recognizing, for the first time in an international treaty, the link between international arms transfers and gender-based violence. We look forward to continuing that vital work along with Member States and civil society, with a view to making women more visible in the disarmament debate. We welcome today's discussion as another step in the right direction.

The Arms Trade Treaty is of course a major step forward in the international community's efforts to regulate the international trade in conventional weapons. As the first legally binding instrument in that regard, it also has strong potential for assisting us greatly in our efforts to control small arms and light weapons. As the ATT enters the final implementation phase before its first Conference of States Parties, to be held in Mexico in August, Ireland is working with States parties and civil society to ensure that the Treaty, which represents a rare and inspiring success for the international disarmament community, will put in place strong and resilient implementation measures that will enable us to carry out its ambitious provisions, not least in relation to small arms and light weapons.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Eler (Turkey): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for organizing this important and timely meeting. We are also grateful for the structured concept note (S/2015/306), annex for this open debate, and to the Secretary-General for his biennial report on small arms and light weapons (SALW) (S/2015/289), which contains valuable information and important recommendations.

The global issue of small arms and light weapons has long been on the agenda of the United Nations, and the Security Council has taken action to address it many times. The relevant Council resolutions and presidential statements, particularly resolution 2117 (2013), constitute a sound basis that outlines the principal directions for action to deal with the growing consequences of the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of such weapons.

Without prejudice to the legitimate right of Member States to self-defence, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, Turkey believes that the illicit trade in, and excessive accumulation of, small arms and light weapons constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security. We share the concerns that have been expressed in the Council today about the destabilizing role such weapons play in protracted conflicts, terrorism and organized crime, including human and drug trafficking. Cognizant of the significant threat such weapons pose to human lives and their devastating effects on the social and economic development of many countries, Turkey strongly supports comprehensive efforts to eradicate the problem of small arms and light weapons at both the international and national levels.

To that end, we pursue policies and strategies that are compatible with international law, including international humanitarian law and human-rights law, and fully comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions and other legally binding international obligations based on the conventions and other legal instruments that Turkey is party to. Turkey also cooperates with the relevant Security Council sanctions committees and incorporates the necessary measures into its national legislation with regard to the production, export and transfer of small arms and light weapons. With regard to international regulations on the arms trade and transfers, I would like to point out that Turkey has signed the Arms Trade Treaty and intends to ratify it as soon as possible.

Turkey believes that the complementary and mutually reinforcing actions taken by the Security Council and the General Assembly on this issue are clear indications of the international community's resolve to solve this problem. Accordingly, Turkey attaches great importance to the fulfilment of the objectives set forth by the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its implementation mechanism, the International Tracing Instrument. Combined, they provide a comprehensive framework for global action to fight against the illicit trade in SALW, which has recorded much progress since 2001.

Turkey is firmly convinced that international cooperation is crucial to attain the desired ends in curbing the illicit trade and excessive accumulation of SALW and preventing their misuse. We believe that transparency and information-sharing would help promote consistency in the implementation of agreed multilateral standards.

Increasing capacity-building is another issue that we need to vigorously address. Turkey believes that increased cooperation and assistance is crucial to improving the capacity of Member States to pursue successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes to prevent their diversion through effective marking, record-keeping and tracing, and to better manage stockpiles and the disposal of surplus SALW and ammunition. Furthermore, Turkey strongly believes that cooperation between national and international law enforcement and customs agencies, hand in hand with industry and non-governmental organizations, plays a key role in our efforts.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We do not want to extend our discussion with the representative of Ukraine, but it is clear that the Ukrainian delegation is using any excuse to disseminate its insinuations and accusations in order to detract from opinions about Kyiv's intention to not implement the Minsk agreements and the measures set out therein, in particular the political portion. We must not forget the primary fact that the Ukrainian authorities are using the weapons at their disposal to carry out attacks in Donbas, which are leading to the deaths of civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure.

The President: The representative of Ukraine has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give her the floor.

Ms. Bila (Ukraine): I would like to reply to underscore the fact that Ukraine has fully complied with the Minsk agreements, which is absolutely not the case with the Russian Federation and the forces it supports. However, that is not the issue we are dealing with in this forum, where we are discussing small arms and light weapons and their illegal transfer, including to the territory of Ukraine. If anybody needs evidence of this, the Ukrainian delegation is willing to provide all the necessary photo evidence of the weapons that were transferred to Ukraine from the stockpiles of the Russian Federation. This is evidence of the Russian Federation's influence and constant participation in the conflict.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.